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## HISTORY OF ART

Volume I ANCIENT ART

Volume II MEDIEVAL ART

Volume III RENAISSANCE ART

Volume IV MODERN ART

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Harper & Brothers

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ELIE FAURE  
HISTORY OF ART  
RENAISSANCE ART

*Translated from the French by*  
WALTER PACH

*Illustrated from Photographs*  
*Selected by the Author*



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RENAISSANCE ART

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**TO MY MOTHER**



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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE criticism was made, when the first edition of this work was published, that it was illustrated with "details" taken from the works of the masters rather than with the works themselves. This criticism would be justified—each work forming an ensemble from which, in principle, nothing should be cut away—if, in the case of certain pictures, the reduction to the size of a page did not deprive the character of the work of its whole appeal to the senses. Have not books been published wherein the "Marriage at Cana" was reduced to the size of the half of a visiting card? And besides, is it not already admitted that one may detach a statue from the porch of a cathedral in order to illustrate a book with it, and that the reproduction of the apse of that cathedral may give a more correct idea of its character than an illustration, too greatly reduced in size, of the cathedral itself? There is no question, in such a book as I have intended this to be, of describing the pictures by the masters under consideration; the problem is one of expressing the spirit of the ensemble of their work. I do not comment upon the picture through the text; I justify the text through the picture or through a fragment of the picture.





MICHAEL ANGELO. *The Fall of Man.* (*Sistine Chapel, Rome.*)

## INTRODUCTION

WE lived for two or three centuries with a feeling that the Italian Renaissance brought us back, for our consolation, into the lost path of ancient art, and that before the Renaissance and outside of it there was nothing but barbarism and confusion. When our need to love them caused us to regard passionately the work left by the artists who, in the last days of the Middle Ages, preceded the Italian dawn, we misunderstood and slandered Italy. We reproached her for the influence that she exercised upon the peoples of the Occident; we refused to see that these peoples, after the temporary exhaustion of their spiritual resources, had to submit to the common law and demand of newer elements that which would fertilize their mind. We are so made that it is very difficult for us to place ourselves outside of history in order to consider it from afar, and so, too easily, we attribute a definitive value to the feel-

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ings which our present desires dictate to us. The need for the absolute, in which lie our suffering and our strength and our glory, is also something that we refuse to recognize in men who took a different path from our own in order to satisfy that need.

When men have invoked the spirit of their own race in order to condemn the influence of Italy because of the errors into which she led imitators unworthy to assimilate her teaching, it was in reality Michael Angelo or Titian who was being accused of belonging to his own race and of not having been born in the thirteenth century in northern Europe. If we listened to the Italian heroes, it was because they came at the hour when our instinct required them. The spirit of the north and of the Occident had flowed back upon the Italy of the Middle Ages, menacing her individuality and at the same time introducing into her the elements that were indispensable for her resurrection. It was necessary that the energy of Italy should assume an appearance of insurrection in order to reject everything that she did not recognize as human and constant in those elements which she received from abroad, and in order that she might give back to the north the impetus which she had received from the north, at the hour when the latter should call for her aid. If the imprint which she left upon the north was a deep one, if it still remains, it is that the great effort put forth in the Middle Ages by the peoples across the Alps and the Rhine had almost exhausted them. And it is also that Italy brought to the world an instrument of investigation that had lain forgotten for twelve centuries and to which our fragment of humanity had still to resort in order not to succumb. With its last breath, the social rhythm, which had found its realization in the Occidental Commune

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and which had expressed itself with such a coherent and anonymous force through the Cathedral and the Nibelungen Lied, was now demanding of the individual that he arise from the midst of the crowds to subject the work of the crowds to his criticism, and to discover in them, in himself, and in the external universe the materials of a new rhythm in which the crowds might one day define themselves, recognize themselves, and find again, for a century or for an hour, the sense of collective action.

The invention of printing did not, as Victor Hugo said, kill the architecture of the ogive. At most it hastened its death slightly. When Gutenberg invented the press, Masaccio and the van Eycks had for ten or fifteen years been pointing out to the painters their new path, and in France all the churches which were being built were so strained in their effect that the architectural elements were rushing to dissociation. Nicolas Froment, Jehan Foucquet, and Enguerrand Charonton were beginning to paint. The invention of printing was due to the same causes as was the decadence of the art that built the edifices in which the whole crowd had a share. The decomposition of architectural unity corresponded with the work of analysis which was beginning to divide the social body, and the liberation of the arts and sciences and the irresistible and sudden rise of sculpture, painting, music, literature, and printing announced the substitution of individual research for the great spontaneous creation in which the newly aroused and magnificent energy of the peoples had for two or three hundred years been summarizing their needs.

What drew our attention toward Italy for so long a time, what made us misunderstand the work of individ-

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ualization which was going on at the same time in France, in Germany, in Flanders, in England, and in Spain, was that this work in the north and in the west was performed without a halt, because the statue descended from the niche and the painting from the stained-glass window without the artist's ceasing to look at the abandoned temple, even while he moved away from it. In Italy, on the contrary, the individualization of the creative energies found admirable tools ready to hand for the work of self-assertion. And there were men for the task, those who for two centuries had been prepared by civil war and by the violence of their passions, even as they had been prepared for this search for their personal law by the character of the soil which had been forming them since the beginning of their history. All the peoples of Europe gave way before Italy's investigation or adopted it, for the reason that Italy undertook her investigation with a mind freer and more mature than theirs. If they did not always understand the conclusions that were reached, it is not Italy that should be held responsible. Moreover, we are young, and we still look to the future. What she gave us of life will live again when we live again.

This more or less gradual or more or less brutal passage from collective expression to individual expression was not new. History is like a heart that beats—like a fist that opens and closes. At certain hours, popular energy, having reached its summit and requiring full freedom of action, demands momentary concentration into a vast symphonic ensemble of all the moral, religious, and social ideas which, before that time, had been scattered among a few minds that were ahead of their time. This is the prodigious moment when the certitude of living in the absolute and of fixing it in our

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souls produces a flash of lightning amid the expanse of darkness, and it is this that lifts up a whole people to the unknown god dwelling within it, while it remains all unconscious of what has occurred. This is the wonderful moment when the individual effaces himself, when all the members of a crowd react at the same time to external forces, when great buildings spring forth from the earth, willed by all, built by all, and subordinating to their social function all the isolated expressions through which men only a day before were seeking to define themselves separately. Egypt, in its ensemble, reached this hour several times in the course of its long life and was able to prolong the hour more than any other people because it was Egypt that opened history and because she proceeded slowly in almost absolute isolation; but even so there were centuries of doubt and hesitation at intervals, and of analysis that is obscure to us because we are too far away to comprehend it perfectly. Chaldea undoubtedly knew this hour, India—nearer to us—lived through it in her frightful intoxication. It was the frenzied and ecstatic dream of Islam. China tried to prolong it within herself for three thousand years. Greece swept rapidly through her hour and left her trace of fire across history. The earliest Doric temples reveal the rapid rise toward this summit of domination which was reached by the anonymous sculptor of Olympia and by Æschylus at the same time, while Phidias began to lean toward its other slope.

But the anonymous sculptor of Olympia and Phidias were already powerfully characterized individuals. Amid the procession of the people marching toward the Parthenon, the voice of Æschylus, one of the most pious voices, was heard above the others, and in his brain he bore Prometheus, who was to attempt to ravish the



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flame from the altar. Since the beginning of history, never had the individual so strongly claimed the right to place his thought at the service of men who did not understand him. By way of these implacable successions of analyses and syntheses<sup>1</sup> which the evolution of the mind imposes upon us like voyages through hell and sojourns in Paradise, we achieve partial syntheses and partial analyses which correspond to momentary triumphs of classes or of tendencies in the social organism. The Greek synthesis, which doubtless attained its strongest expression at some time between the poems of Homer and the Medean wars, was a short stage in the course of the long analysis which separated the decline of the old Oriental civilizations from the obscure beginnings of the modern civilizations. But it was the decisive stage which determined the future.

In any case, the philosophic and æsthetic activity in which it culminated seemed forever to dissociate the elements of human energy, and when it had introduced into the world the terrible ferments of reason and liberty, the world seemed condemned never to recover the profound harmony in which all men meet and in which the social rhythm submerges all the individual rhythms. It is true that painting has revealed to us almost nothing of what the soul of the ancients confided to it as it wandered in search of itself; and yet painting is *par excellence* the plastic instrument of the individual, through its infinite suppleness, its obedience to every change of direction, to every leap, to every flash of light, to every shadow of the mind as well as through its faculty for binding together the most complex relationships. Sculpture is still a social art which has to produce in space a block closed on all sides—it must

<sup>1</sup> The Saint-Simonians called them critical and organic periods.

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therefore respond to clearly constructed philosophic ideas, and when it was torn from the temple, it could not do otherwise than betray to us the disquietude, the doubt, the dispersion and irremediable disorder of the social body itself; it could not fail to let us foresee the coming of a new world, even though it did not indicate to us the true direction of that world. Be that as it may, the Hellenic analysis so disintegrated the old world that it seemed to be going down forever, and it had to appeal first to the Jews and then to the barbarians in order that, in a new territory, it might once more lay the foundation for a social rhythm, which did not culminate until seventeen centuries after the time of the Parthenon—with the Commune of the Occident, the French cathedral, the popular poems of Germany, and the market of the Flemings.

The Renaissance owes its name to the fact that it expressed an hour of our history analogous to that one of which Euripides and Praxiteles lived the first and most decisive moments. Only, we are better able to grasp the plastic manifestations of it. There remains to us something else than the dissolving and sacred thought of the philosophers who affirmed its character—Rabelais, Montaigne, and Erasmus, in whom Socrates and his disciples would not have recognized themselves, but who, in the reverse sense, and in their relation with the mediæval world, played the rôle that Socrates and his disciples had played respecting the ancient world. There remains to us something else than the anarchic architecture to which it gave rise in Italy. It has left us painting, an individual work, it is true, but objective, even so, and one that could not endure except that it express a living continuity in the brain of the artist, and no longer, like the arts that precede it, in the

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anonymous instinct of a collectivity. It is especially through painting that we know why the Renaissance was necessary to us and why we love it. We know why we shall not cease to be grateful to the great individuals who gathered up into their soul the soul of the crowds that had disappeared, in order to transmit their hopes to the crowds that were to come. For it is they who pass on the torch. It is they who are the bond of union between the general needs that men no longer feel and the general needs that they will feel again one day—between the organism of yesterday and the organism of to-morrow. They are in themselves a crowd, and the continuity of sentiment that bound men to men found its refuge in their hearts. The Michael Angelo of the Sistine, Rubens, Rembrandt, and Velasquez are, more clearly than the writers, the scientists, or the philosophers, the individual symphonies which, in critical periods, collected the elements of the people's symphony that, for the moment, had been scattered to all the winds of sensation and the mind. One can love them with a love equal to that which one feels for the abandoned temple. Between a cathedral window and a picture by Titian there is the distance that separates an admirable voice in the most beautiful popular choir from a symphony by Beethoven.

It is this that gives to those who arise here and there, to hold up the columns of the temple with their titanic effort, the appearance of being in radical opposition to their surroundings. They seem ill adapted to the society in which they are because they have within them the grand rhythm—invisible to the blind multitudes—of the adaptations to come. They broke dead rhythms to create new rhythms. They are the more solitary the higher they rise and the more complex,

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universal, permanent, and profound, are the elements of life that are brought into activity by the symphonies which they hear in the silence of their hearts.

But since a social synthesis is the secret goal of their effort, since men are joyful when their purpose is realized, since pessimism occurs only in the rare minds that suffer through their loneliness, and since optimism is the fruit of communion among men, how is it that when this divine communion has been achieved, how is it, I repeat, that men cannot safeguard it? The reason is that no society could resist the general stagnation which the maintenance of this communion would bring about. The reason is that life is nothing else but effort. And the balance of the elements that compose it is never a static realization, but always a tendency; or at least, the instant in which the balance is effected is too imperceptible for us to be able to arrest it otherwise than through the works which spring forth at that moment from our hearts.

This dynamic equilibrium, ever destroyed, ever restored, which it is impossible to maintain but which engenders a hope that we cannot stifle, this repose which we pursue with the desire of attaining it and with the presentiment that we shall lose it immediately, could not be prolonged unless the social organs adapt themselves in a spontaneous, close, and yet mobile manner to economic and moral conditions whose evolution never ceases. But very soon there comes a moment when the appearance of new peoples and new methods, of unforeseen discoveries, and of currents of external ideas disturbs the balance of the scales, when one of the organs tends to grow at the expense of the other, when the narrow egoism of one class, of one caste, or of some particular group of individuals gains possession

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of the work of the others for its own profit, and arouses, among those others, isolated forces which will sprout little by little in minds adapted to the search for the law of a new equilibrium. The unequal distribution of wealth, the needs that it develops, and the groupings of interests that it necessarily creates have doubtless been, up to the present, the most visibly active factor of the social dissociations which we observe in history. At the same time, through the aristocracies of culture which it helped to form, it was preparing the ground for the future associations of the very elements that it separated one from another. It has always been believed that luxury exercised a favorable influence on the development of art. In reality, the relationship which certainly exists between luxury and art has given to wealth the advantage of a rôle that it has never possessed. The intellectual forces of a people are born of the effort from which spring, with these forces, the wealth of individuals, and the power of radiation, and expansion of the collectivity. At the hour when these forces become conscious of themselves, architecture is dead and sculpture dies. If the aristocracies of wealth avail themselves of the flowering of literature and more especially of painting, it is also they who bring the arts into contempt, even as the acquiring of riches destroys the power of a people by raising up around it organs of isolation and defense which end by crushing it. The only wealth of mankind is action.

As a matter of fact, the influence of Italy was arrested when Italy had become the house of pleasure for Europe, as the influence of Greece had come to an end at the moment when Athens, grown rich, was no longer considered good for anything by those who had just conquered her save to teach them and to amuse them.

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That was enough. To France, who was broken by war and whose formidable effort had twisted and dislocated the limbs and the backbone of the great ogival nave, Italy had indicated a path of regeneration. And along this path France was to gather up powerful instruments with which to emancipate herself. To the Shakespearean cycle she had furnished an inexhaustible treasury of sensations, ideas, and images, a mirror which the breath of the north blurred so that the soul of its poets should not be able to find in it the limits of its mystery. She had prepared the way for the all-powerful hero of painting who was to appear in Flanders at the beginning of the seventeenth century and was to stir the whole world by opening the gates of the modern epoch. He did so when he poured into the single mold of southern rhythms the abounding matter of the flat countries where the mist and the rain take on the color of the sun. And although the protest that the reformers made against the moral dissolution of Italy gave to Germany's political insurrection a character of antagonism toward the Renaissance of the south, it was the example of Italy which permitted them, later on, to arouse the individual forces that were needed by their country.

The search for social equilibriums occurs in space—across the face of the earth, as well as in time—throughout the course of history; and the conditions of that search change according to the economic and geographical circumstances which rendered it indispensable. The countries of the north of Europe, in their relation with the countries of the south, had to experience a reaction which may fairly be compared with that which the Jewish people had attempted against the influence of the Greek people. The exaltation of the intellectual

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and sensual qualities of men gave way suddenly before the qualities which had been insisted upon by the Jewish prophets. This is, at least, an outline of the significance which, in the mind of those thinkers who expressed it, is to be attributed to the movements of which we have been speaking, movements which are too complex and too profound for us to be able to gather up their political and social meaning into a single formula. The universal character of primitive Christianity and its demand for an inner discipline imposed on the barbarians of the north and the west of Europe bonds which were necessary for the restraining and utilization of their unemployed energy. The Reformation, in its turn, or at least the movement that culminated in the Reformation, permitted them to recover their personality, which was being compromised in the course of time by the progressive invasion of Latin idealism, and to free their economic activity from the domination of Rome. If the outer form which the religious and political powers of Germany gave to the agitation for reform stifled the spiritual powers released by the Renaissance, it was to revive with the great music in the genius of the north, which had been freed and enabled to pour its formidable life into the soul of the men of the future.

Whatever the violations of the innocence of man committed by Catholicism and the Protestant sects, we must accept them as necessary social secretions from which, during centuries, the man of the south and the man of the north have derived what they needed for the establishment of a balance with the natural and moral surroundings in which their life was passed. The individualism in matters of passion of the southern peoples imposed upon them the need for a social frame-

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work of a powerfully hierarchic character; in this, all their unrest and all their inner conflicts could find an exact solution and, in case of need, appeal for the support of an immutable force from without. The naturally social character of the peoples of the north, where the harder struggle for existence and the more continuous effort render man necessary to man at every moment, called for a lever from within which should stir the moral nature. In the century when the Germanic genius and the Italian genius expanded in a supreme burst of energy, we shall see the painters who represent the two countries considering form from almost opposite points of view. On the one hand, there are frescoes on the walls, made to be seen by all. On the other hand, we find isolated works, belonging to brotherhoods or ordered by donors. On the one hand, we find artists more powerfully individualized because the multitude around them is anarchic and passionate, and they unite the spirit which is scattered through the crowd by raising up an ideal, generalizing a hierarchic image of nature. On the other hand, artists who are scarcely liberated from the collective instinct of the Middle Ages divide up the common spirit by particularizing all the aspects of nature which they see confused and in detail and all on the same plane. Rubens, the man of the north and a Catholic, will bring about a momentary harmony between the soul of Michael Angelo and the soul of Dürer.

But the world will have to wait for him for a hundred years. Until we reach him and despite the incessant borrowing from Italy of the peoples of the north, despite the fact that Italy sought from the colorists of Flanders advice the evidence of which is less easy to discover, there was, between the spirit of the north and



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the spirit of the south, a kind of antagonism which was necessary to the effort of the world and which, doubtless, will not disappear until the day when, the unity of Europe having been effected, more numerous and widely separated groups will confront their desires. The thin landscapes of the south, their transparence, the sober and precise lines which arrest them in the intelligence and which engender in us clear ideas and essential relationships permitted the great Italians to create an intellectual interpretation of nature which, from the sculptors of Egypt to Michael Angelo, and from Phidias to Titian, has changed only in appearance, and tends to summarize universal life in the human form, as purified as the mind itself from the accidental surroundings which limit, and imperfections which encompass, it. The landscapes of the north, engulfed in mists and buried under leaves, are marked by a confusion which disturbs us with vague sensations of a tangle of images—powerless to organize themselves into ideas. And this was the force that opened to the artists of the northern countries the gates of a mystery in which the forms float and seek one another and make it impossible for sentiment to eliminate and to choose. The men of one group, by reducing nature to an arbitrarily settled harmony, raised man up to be a god; the other group mingled men with life in general by considering nature as a blind symphony in which consciousness is lost in the whirl of sounds, forms, and colors. Hence the spiritual exaltation of those who, the better to seize the higher destiny of man, forgot his misery and their own suffering and saw him forever ascending; hence the humanity of those who, each time that they turned toward man, saw him cradled by the fraternal wave of matter, of ideas, and of movements. The anthropo-

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morphism of the one group and the pantheism of the other have given to our mind the two poles of its power, between which it is perhaps condemned to move eternally and from which it derives desire and doubt, but also the will to action.

And what does doubt matter, and what does it matter that the desire is never quenched! What does it matter if we feel, escaping from us at every moment, that monstrous truth which we think to grasp at every moment and which ceaselessly flows out of us and beyond us, because it is living just as we are and because we create it every day and condemn it to death by the mere fact that we have wrested it from ourselves! What does it matter that there should be, from age to age, broken voices which tell us that we shall never know everything! That is our glory. Each time that we set to work, we know everything, because at the moment of creation there flow into us all the living forces of the world which we invoke and epitomize for the illumination of our spirit and the guidance of our hand. If our love for the Renaissance is so intoxicating, it is that our love consented to suffer in order to bring forth from the night those moving truths whose exhaustless power of creation we are barely beginning to perceive to-day, and this again is because they are inseparable from all the truths that ever were and all that are still to come. We shall not forget those invincible men who, when all the powers leagued together to bar their way, when their books were burned and their crucibles were smashed, when the ax and the sword were raised against them and the fagots were prepared for them around the stake, did not recoil from the task of discovering facts and ideas which each day broke down the equilibrium of soul that they

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acquired so painfully, and who kept alive in themselves the effort necessary for other conquests. We shall not forget that when humanity, exhausted by the crisis of love through which it had just lived, uttered a cry of anguish, they hastened to lift up and console that love. We shall not forget that at the same hour, when a finger, which had until then pressed upon invisible lips, was lifted at some place, Keppler and Copernicus, with a single gesture, pushed back the sky beyond the very limits of the dream and of intuition; Columbus and Magellan opened up the great routes of the earth in order that it might be placed within our hands like a weapon of combat; Vésale and Michael Servetus seized upon the initial movements of life within our entrails; Shakespeare freed from theological uses the boundless poem that we bear within our hearts; Rabelais, Erasmus, and Montaigne affirmed that force is eternal and that doubt is necessary; Cervantes wrested the life of our idealism from all the evil paths of disappointments and mirages; and Italian art was slowly dying from the effort it had had to make in order to introduce order into the mind, and through order freedom.

# RENAISSANCE ART

*Withdraw and pray, while that I do  
engage upon this unequal and perilous combat.*

CERVANTES





FLORENCE

## Chapter I. FLORENCE

### I



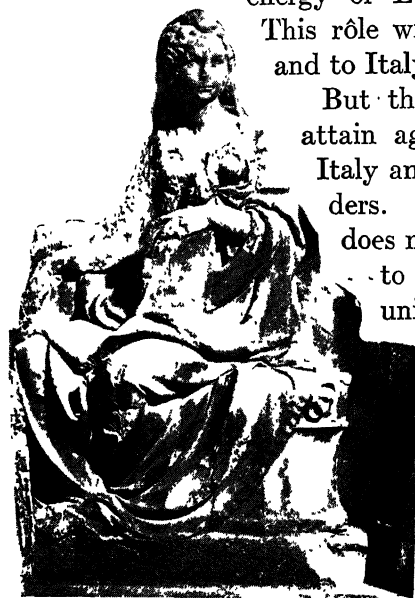
PISA was vanquished—Pisa where the first architects and the first sculptors of Italy had arisen—Siena was reduced to a semi-voluntary silence, and the Florentine Republic was strongly defined in the face of the rival cities. And now Italian factionalism, which has been but slightly characterized during the chaos of the Middle Ages and which, moreover, has been restrained by a group of beliefs held in common and by the spiritual ascendancy of the Papacy—Italian factionalism is becoming more pronounced. On this burning soil, full of illustrious memories, the municipal spirit tends toward a political idea calculated to fortify still further the passionate indi-

vidualism which was to transform Europe. France is exhausting herself through the effort that she has put forth. The cathedral weakens and trembles on its too slender supports. It is not upon its soil, rendered sterile by an interminable war, and in the heart of an unhappy people that the elements of the shattered energy of Europe will be reborn.

This rôle will belong to Flanders and to Italy.

But these elements will not attain again their cohesion in Italy any more than in Flanders. Italian individualism does not understand bowing to the requirements of unity. When the arts in

their association were expressing the multitude, they seemed to issue from one mind. They appeared divided and hostile when they expressed a single individual. Every Italian artist willingly took the title of architect,



JACOPO DELLA QUERCIA. Allegorical figure. (*Museum of Siena.*)

sculptor, and painter. But rarely did he speak with equal power the three languages to which he laid claim. Even after the mediæval spirit had everywhere dragged down the strength which had erected the monument representative of faith and of the city, Italy did not wholly cease producing architects. War was still agitating the republican cities, and over the flagstones

of the streets there was ever the necessity for those hard rectangular palaces, high and bare, that Brunelleschi erected to face the lacework of the churches, to assert, in defiance of the invading soul of the north, the survival of the Latin. She formed fewer sculptors. She saw the birth of so many painters that she seemed to have invented painting, and the memory of the deeds she wrought at this time has not yet ceased affecting us.

From the thirteenth century onward, painting expressed Italian individualism. The Sienese Gothics and Giotto and Cimabue were already making altar pictures or painting their decorations directly on the walls at a time

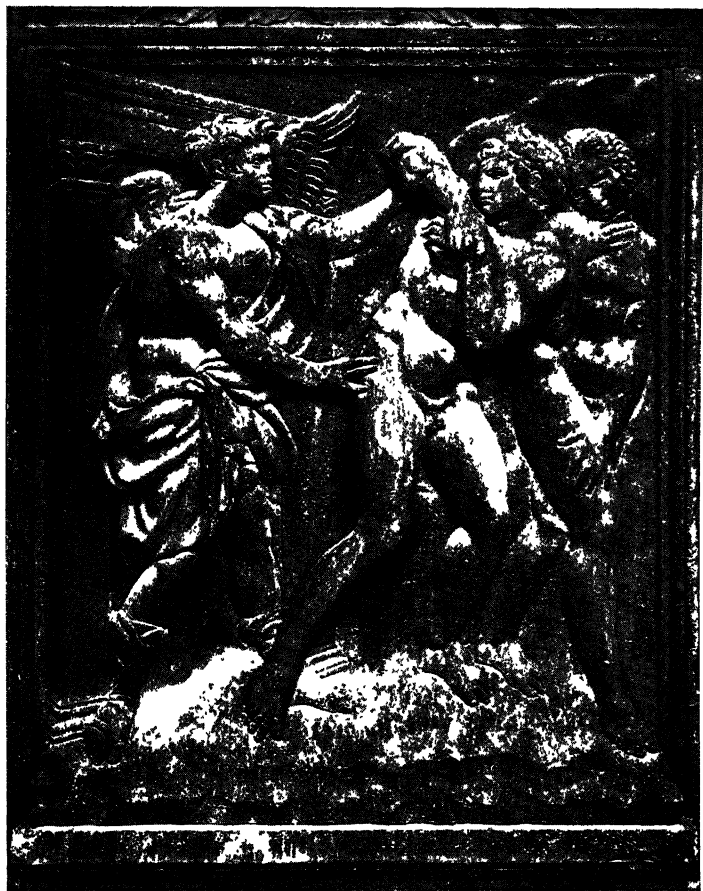


JACOPO DELLA QUERCIA. *Charity.*  
(*Palazzo Comunale, Siena.*)



when Frenchmen and Flemings had no other knowledge than that of stained glass or the illuminating of missals. When the Italian painters, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, asked the Flemish painters for the secrets of their technique, they did so because they felt that the language of painting was the one that had always been meant for them. As their natural genius forbade them borrowing from the Flemings anything but the external processes, and as nothing was known about the painting of antiquity, they were, from the first, as painters, themselves—and nothing but themselves. If they were influenced by the sculptors and the humanists, it was by way of so many commentaries and new temperaments that the influence reached them, so that it gave only a more marked character to their work.

The sculptors, on the contrary, claimed that their inspiration was drawn from the ancient works. Nicola Pisano had a collection of old sarcophaguses. His successors, Giovanni, Nanni di Banco, Jacopo della Quercia, Donatello, and Ghiberti were nourished at the warmest hearths of life that the world has ever known, and yet not one of them, whatever the freedom of his inspiration or the fresh vigor of his language, not one of them forgot that on this soil, a thousand years before, had arisen, cities of marble. When still a boy, thin and poor, Donatello followed Brunelleschi to Rome. There they lived like brigands, their hands hardened by the pick-ax and the spade; the wild vines and the fig trees were the ladders by which they scaled the walls in order to measure their opening and thickness; they passed whole days in the subterranean darkness of the old buried temples, and went mad when they had unearthed a column, a statue, or a cluster of four or five old stones.



JACOPO DELLA QUERCIA. Adam and Eve expelled from Paradise.  
(*Cathedral of Bologna.*)

. . . Upon their return they understood better the reasons for their pride.

And so it was not the weight of the memories of antiquity that hampered the growth of sculpture in Italy. She felt too imperious a need of affirming her inner glory to consent to ask the ancient statue makers anything more than a mental discipline, whose chief effect was to accentuate her expressive power even while it attempted to overcome her. If, indeed, sculpture was never the chosen language of her artists, it was because it is difficult to isolate sculpture from the architecture that gives it birth, because in itself it is architecture, since it always responds to the social and religious life of a whole people in action, summarizing the general aspirations of that people when its temples are threatened. It has not the power to dissemble nor to choose; it is in space that it must live its impersonal life; defined on every side, it fails when it tries to hide forms from our eyes in order to impose other forms upon us and to pass from one set of forms to another by those imperceptible gradations, in the use of which painting excels. Too intense to remain quite the master of himself, too subtle to go straight to his object, the Italian never spoke, as the French or the Greeks did, that relentless language which forbids the imagination to go beyond the limits of logical planes and well-defined volumes.

Like his Roman ancestor who, when the sculptors brought Greek formulas to Rome, preserved the Latin spirit there only when he hollowed out his sarcophaguses or the walls of his arches of Triumph, the Italian artist did not really know how to work stone save when he approached the decorative bas-relief where light and shadow seize upon the form to bend it to the needs of

the sculptors. Sculpture and painting have always followed, step by step, the outbursts and the eclipses of the spirit of individualism. The least individualistic people of the ancient world, the Egyptians, treated painting itself as sculptors, seeing it only as profiles projected like flat shadows upon the walls. The most highly individualized people of the modern world, the Italians, treated sculpture as painters—Jacopo della Quercia being the possible exception. The Alexandrian bas-relief affirmed ancient individualism as the Italian bas-relief was to indicate to the artists the means of getting away from the sentiment held by the mass of the people, in order to found a new intellectual order. Whenever impersonal art becomes weak, sculpture passes into painting by the intermediary of the image carved on the walls.

Painting is the language of the uncertainties, the outbursts and the retreats of the heart. It is no longer the rebellious material whose wounds, once they are inflicted, are never to be concealed, and which obeys only him who can accept a great collective idea, whose soul moves with security in the closed circle of a social organism that seems unshakable. Stone dominates the mind; it is more ancient than the mind. Man has brought painting under the direction of the mind. It follows his hesitations and his meanderings and his progressions; it bounds or contracts or veils itself with him. It is the language of intellectual passion. It defines the individual.

Therefore, it is by painting especially that Italy has spoken to us. But even in this art she could not have more than a personal conception of the painted surface. The function of a superior mind is to tear the crowd away from its customary idols in order to impose on it

those idols which the ardor of his meditations gives to this mind the right and assigns the duty to pursue until death. The walls of the churches and of the municipal palaces alone are sufficiently in view and vast enough to appease the fever of the artist, the eagerness for sentiment of the spectator, and the pride of the



JACOPO DELLA QUERCIA. Monument of Maria del Caretto, detail.  
(*Cathedral of Lucca.*)

priest and the city. Fresco, which, moreover, was counseled by reason of the transparency of the Florentine atmosphere, the clearness of tones and contours, the bareness of Roman walls that had neither windows nor stained glass—fresco became the natural language of all the Tuscan painters. The old masters of the Middle Ages, Cimabue, Giotto, Duccio, Simone Martini, the Gaddis, the Lorenzettis, and Orcagna, scarcely knew any other. Cennino Cennini wrote an ingenuous and touching book about it. When the new awakening

comes, Angelico takes possession of it, Masaccio gives it an accent that no one after him can recover, and Michael Angelo makes of it a terrible instrument which causes the whole monument to quiver. It seems as if Andrea del Castagno, Filippo Lippi, Uccello, Ghirlandajo, and Luini are really themselves only through it and thanks to it. Antonio Pollaiuolo and Botticelli, above all, discover themselves in it, become proud and grave and simple as soon as they employ it, and recall, by the depth and purity of their accent, the character of life surprised like a shadow on the wall by the old Etruscan decorators. Fresco was born of a close collaboration between the artist and the mason. How many researches in common were needed, how many discouraging setbacks and bruised enthusiasms there were before the painter was acquainted with the qualities of his material, before he knew how to prepare it, to wait for it, and to seize the instant when it should demand that he deliver to it the final flower of his soul, which he had long been cultivating in his drawings and cartoons! They left their beds in the last hours of the night in order to paint before the sun should dry the walls; all day long they lived in feverish expectation of those admirable moments when they communed with the stone for the sake of the eternity of the spirit. The life of their passions was no more than the superior and tyrannical preparation for the mission to which they felt themselves called. They made of fresco a profound instrument from which they knew how to draw such dramatic accents that the flame of their hearts seems even now to set the walls on fire. There are neither hesitations nor alterations. In order for the damp mortar, in its gradual hardening, to be able to seize the color and crystallize it, to take a little of its splendor,

and to give it the earthy and dull beauty of the water and the stone with which it was incorporated, there was needed that sweeping rapidity of the Italian soul, which never retraces its steps, which is forever furious and goaded because it cannot outstrip itself. The especial character of fresco is its ability to fix the moment of passion in a material as solid as meditation.

## II

Now, in fresco the moment of passion was prolonged even as the vibration of a string which continues after



LORENZO Ghiberti. Gate of the Baptistery of Florence, detail.

the fingers have ceased to touch it, and recommences at a new touch just when the vibration is about to die away. From her long Christian education Florence had to liberate the desire that she felt within herself as she beheld the statues that had been unearthed, as she read

the ancient poets and philosophers, as she lifted her wild eyes to the rim of the mountains. The problem was to find the passage between the social ideal vainly sought by the Italy of the Middle Ages and the intellectual ideal toward which the Renaissance was tending. And that was the glory and the pain of the painting of the Tuscans.

For them this great century began with an indecision that lasted until the end. Of the strong and healthy joy of Giotto, cradling in his great undulating line the lofty certitudes on which all of mediæval society lived, nothing much remained. In the cloister, to be sure, away from the world, the belief in them persisted, but it took on the appearance of an illusion voluntarily accepted. The monk, Angelico, a vigorous builder, indeed, and who transmits to the great classics—in addition to the deviations and the weaknesses of the last primitives and the hesitations of the precursors of Raphael—the grand structural logic of Giotto, the monk, Angelico, never dreamed that he was celebrating Christianity somewhat as one illuminates a legend in the margin of an old book. This legend softened him, without doubt, and even amused him. The most terrible stories unrolled like a child's tale, and it was nearly always the gentlest of them that he selected. As he believed in hell, and as hell rumbled at the gates of his cloister, his inexhaustible imagination knew full well how to mingle and oppose dramatic crowds, how to cloud the heavens with arrows and lances, how to crush the feet and hands of the Saviour on the great cross around which suppliant forms were prostrated. But he was far more attracted by the visions of Paradise, with its lyres, violins and trumpets of gold, by the angels winged with multicolored plumes in the pure

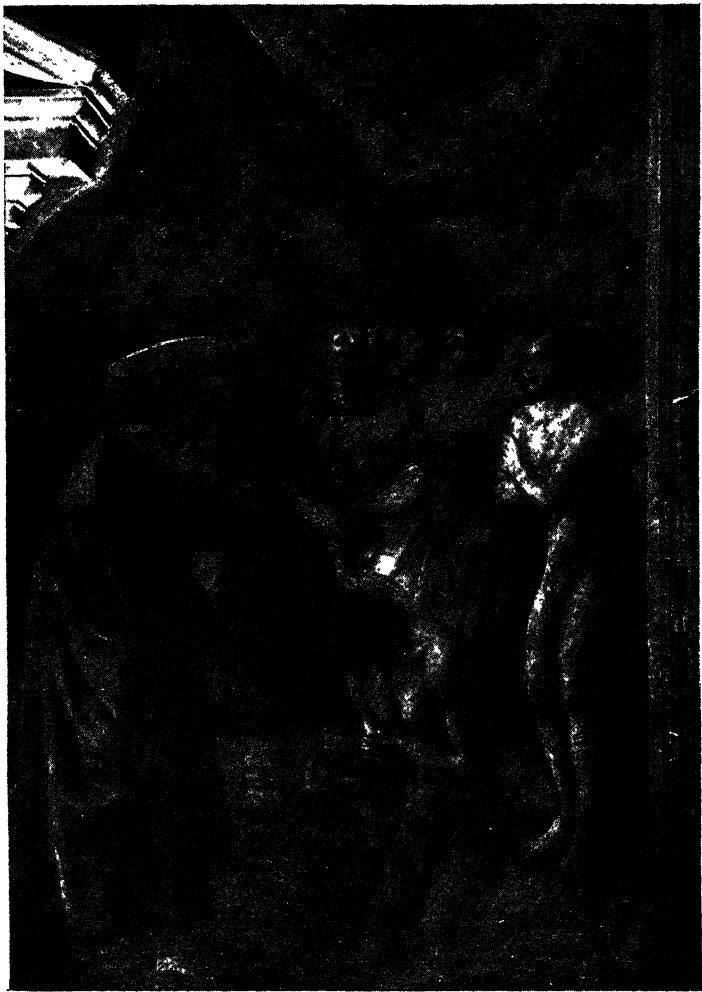


striated landscapes of black cypress trees. His was a charming nature, happy in loving, happy in living, happy that there were flowers in the fields so that he might spread them under the feet of the young saints. Even the blood of the martyrs made white daisies grow in the reddened grass. He never failed to associate



MASOLINO DA PANICALE. St. Peter, detail of the fresco.  
(*Church of the Carmine, Florence.*)

with his enchantment the springtime and the summertime of the Florentine countryside. He was too candid to perceive that he was enjoying painting for its own sake and that he loved the mother of Jesus with a love so delightful only because she had the exquisite countenance of a timid little virgin, because she wore a beautiful dress all of white and had an aureole of gold. He was not the first, certainly, to recount the Annunciation. The Sienese returned to it at every oppor-



MASACCIO. The Baptism, fresco. (*Church of the Carmine, Florence.*)

tunity. Only, among those greatest mystics, inclosed within a declining religion, the marvelous story seemed



MASACCIO. Adam and Eve  
expelled from Paradise.  
(*Church of the Carmine,  
Florence.*)

to come from a dead world, it had the odor of a withering flower and of the last breath of the incense. With Fra Angelico, on the contrary, a fresh and chaste humanity was entering into it gently. He was immersed to the shoulders in his century, but he saw hardly anything of it, for his two eyes were turned away from its violent visions and saw little else but flowering meadows, blond hair, embroidered robes, and the heavens resplendent with stars; he heard scarcely anything of his century, for he knew how to close his ears against its tumult in order to listen to the harps and the pretty voices of the singers. It was a most delicate bride whose hand he took to lead her to the new world. As she awaited the burning embrace of the heroes who were approaching, it was from

him that she recovered the innocence so necessary to her. Italy had been struggling for two centuries to wash her clean of the original sin. The purifiers of the world had

been outraging her for so long that at the hour when life overflowed in men's hearts, those among them who were to recreate woman for the future turned to her with their terrible adoration. For two thousand years she had been forgotten or besmirched! They asked pardon of her with frenzied sobs, on their knees, lifting their hands toward her and not daring to lift their eyes. All his life Dante remained faithful to a dead woman. All his life Petrarch loved a living woman whom he had no desire to possess. Giotto spoke of women with so much tenderness that it is in the arms, in the hands, and in the bended knees of the mothers and wives that he detected the parting of all the animate curves which attached the forms to the center of the human drama. When the monk half opened the door of his cloister to observe women as they passed, the crystal voice of the Florentine bells entered with the breath of the roses, and both the monk and the women were purified. Truly their love was an innocent one. They wondered at everything, at themselves, at the things that were told them, at the pink-and-white houses, at the terraced hills, and at the idea that there could be tears and tragedies when nature was so delightful and when the miracle proclaimed was so simple and so touching. The poets of the Middle Ages had effaced from their hearts the memory of the ancient evils, and as both of them were ignorant of love, they did not know that they were to suffer again. And yet, only a few steps away from the Beato Angelico, life's experience was beginning again. While in the light and the silence of which his pale harmonies were, so to speak, the perfume, he was painting the lawns full of flowers and the little virgins who always kept their hands crossed on their bosoms, Masaccio was working, in a dark church,

to cover an almost invisible wall with the drama of conscience which defines in advance the activity of the critical centuries opened by the Florentines.

To be exact, Masaccio was not the first of his line. It was in Siena, the mystic land, the focus of the most pro-



FRA ANGELICO. Ecstasy of St. Francis. (*Museum of Berlin.*)

nounced discord between the evolution of the world and the traditions of faith, that the sculptor Jacopo della Quercia had uttered the cry of alarm which Masaccio himself certainly heard. The work seems of a singular maturity when one knows it to be the very first, before that of Angelico, before that of Masaccio, before that of Donatello, and before that of Masolino da Panicale, the painter who so disturbs us by the pictures he left in Masaccio's chapel some years before the time of the

latter artist. Jacopo's work is about contemporaneous with the extraordinary effort of Ghiberti in decorating the bronze doors of the Baptistery of Florence. It is even broader, and were it not for its august ruggedness one would think that it had come a hundred years after Angelico. Thanks to Giovanni Pisano, sculpture had taken a great lead and could express its drama more forcibly than the painters who were still encumbered with imagery and with Byzantinism, and who were incapable of rising above school formulas and traditional prejudices, as Giotto had done. One might think this work a powerful sketch for the tragedy of the Sistine and the Tomb of the Medici. Whether Jacopo was decorating the fountain on the Piazza del Municipio, whether he was carving on the façade of San Petronio at Bologna the figure of Adam digging in the ground or Eve driven from Paradise after the innocent and formidable drama of the first love, we already get violent figures with frowning brows, heads borne by necks as a weapon is borne by an arm, contracted and muscular hands clasping an indomitable child, and the spirited movement of torsos and flanks and breasts created to shield and to nourish all the joys and all the ills of the world—the cry of an angry prophet. The highest human symbolism was uniting the soul with the form. The eternal subject, the one that the Jewish poets wrested from the anecdote to install it until the end of time in the very mechanism of our minds, the unchanging story of man as he opens his eyes to life, as he wills to interrogate life, as he is wounded by life and condemned to interrogate it more deeply so as to dress that wound even while he inflicts others on himself—the eternal subject blossomed from the stone. The spirit of the artist and the spirit of the stone itself



FRA ANGELICO. The Annunciation, fresco.  
(*San Marco, Florence.*)

fused in the flash of the great lyric intuition through which the motionless laws of universal harmony accord with the most ingenuous and the most egoistic sentiment of our sorrows, of our cares, and of our daily work.



FRA ANGELICO. The Crucifixion, detail. (*Museum of San Marco, Florence.*)

Jacopo della Quercia did not dream that the monotonous tragedy, which we are led to accept as a cruel need when we question it continuously and deeply, could cause silly tears to flow and draw forth moralizing protests against the implacable destiny that we bear in our hearts from the day of our birth. He accepted the human drama, and the human drama accepted brought

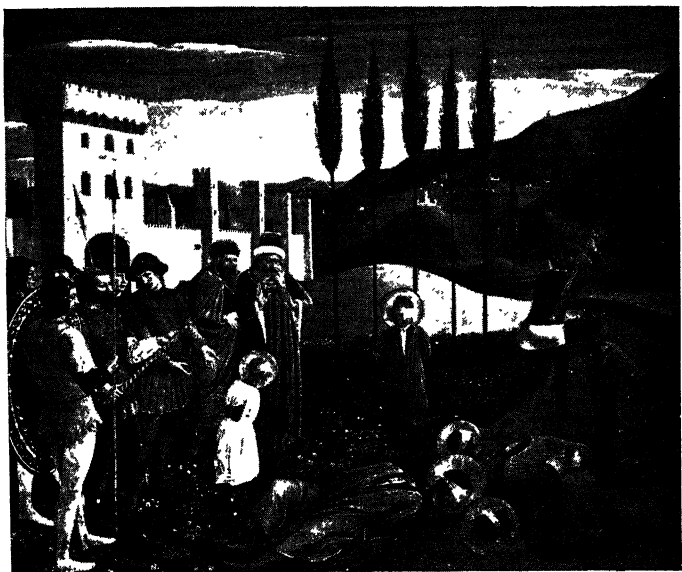


him his recompense. A terrible force dwelt in his sculptured stones, the profound sentiment of primitive men expressed itself by the full form that the world assumes in its periods of expansion, thus increasing its majesty tenfold. He was already master of his great soul. His expressive surfaces sensed the long silences; beside him Donatello seems contracted with pain and Michael Angelo convulsed by fury and disgust. When he lays a dead person on the slab of a funerary statue, he knows how to bring to the forehead the appearance of positive peace, and the work takes on tragic grandeur because one feels that passion has been arrested by the planes of the marble at every leap of the heart and of the hand. And withal, he had already leaped over the gate of hell, had left all hope behind. He outstripped his whole century to arrive, with a single bound, at the conclusion of Michael Angelo, and no one understood him.

Masaccio, on the contrary, immersed in a milieu more alive and more mobile, seizing hold, from the first, of that tool, painting, by which Italian genius best expresses itself, and dying, a mystery, at twenty-seven, was destined by his very hesitations to act much more directly upon the mind of his time. That which he defended, that which he venerated, that which he wanted to believe, all attached him to the Middle Ages. But through the sensation and the disquietude and the new faith that rose in him despite himself, he was already defining the new century in its most grievous conflict. On the old wall of Santa Maria del Carmine he had already painted Man and Woman driven forth by the angel from Eden; but he took their hands to guide them, beyond their misfortune, to the Paradise within their reach. He gave birth to the

Renaissance, and it was because he lived that it sought, by its earnest study of form, to renew the lost rhythms of life.

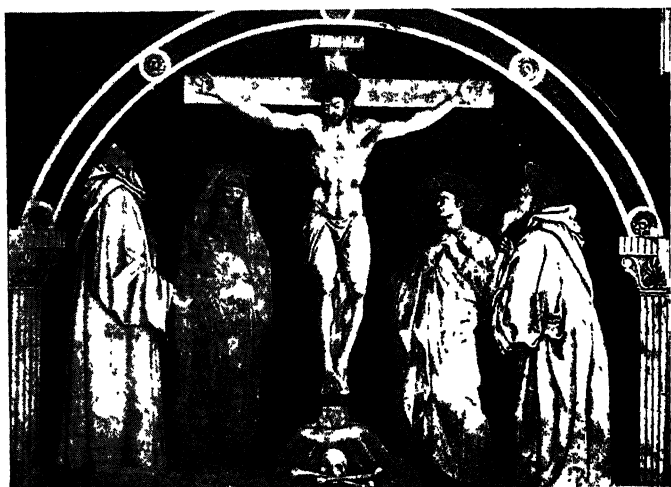
He invented painting. It was in the dark chapel decorated by Masaccio that Raphael, da Vinci, Signorelli, and Michael Angelo came to seek their initiation.



FRA ANGELICO. Martyrdom of Saints Cosimo and Damian,  
detail. (*Louvre.*)

As we are to-day, so they were seized by those crowds that are reborn in the shadows, emerging slowly but irresistibly from their uniform atmosphere, like great larvæ of the renewed spirit and heart of men coming forth from the confused energy of primitive matter. Masaccio, at the age of twenty-five, knew what the greatest discovered only at the approach of old age—

that painting is the passage, the modeling sought for, the shadow that turns around the forms, enveloping them with silence, uniting them with the forms that are near them and behind them, and sculpturing the picture into its receding planes, as a sculptor hollows out the marble to its depths. He had discovered that what nature reveals to us is the continuity of its



ANDREA DEL CASTAGNO. The Crucifixion. (*Uffizi.*)

aspects. Not more than five or six men, if as many after him, have possessed completely that sense which has given them the power to imprint the unity and the movement of life on the world issuing from their hearts. Florence understood him well, but it was not able to follow him, and even da Vinci failed at the task.

This conquest of unity by an intelligence marked the end of the Middle Ages. In France, it had achieved its unity of instinct socially, each brain and each hand bringing a stone to the edifice without knowing how

and why the edifice should be living. In Italy, Giotto had realized in himself the moral unity of his race, but the world was not mature enough to allow him at the same time to take possession of the plastic language wherein the shaded surfaces reach a vanishing point in depth and whereby the individual is defined in his baffling complexity. When Masaccio, in his "Baptism," saw those great bare forms emerging from the crowd in which dramatic figures detach from the russet shadow like denser masses in a fiery mist, he must have felt descending upon his mind that sadness of the evenings to which the presentiment of the expected daylight gives the added anguish of hope. A sublime soul! It was not necessary for him to express the imperishable tragedy of man exiled from happiness for having willed to be man, of man reviled by God and cooling the burn of his remorse in the water of absolution: it was within him that the imperishable tragedy dwelt. When he indicated to the world that the living form which it commissioned him to study would offer it a refuge, he closed its path to new symbols until it should have learned to know nature again; he threw it back upon analysis—that is to say, upon sadness.

## III

The whole great century of Florence, which no longer believed, suffered because it did not know whether the faith it had abandoned was still vouchsafed to it or whether it must seek the elements of another faith in the knowledge of the old world and of living nature toward which its instinct drew it. Hungering and thirsting for knowledge, it saw great flashes of joy against a background of despair. It was violent, but full of pity; criminal, but ascetic; anarchic, but creative.

It sought in vain, between its new sense of life and the vacillating reason which the death of the mediæval spirit had liberated in it, a harmony only half conceived among certain men, but which was to perfect itself later, outside of itself, and away from the places



DONATELLO. Bas-relief of the Tribuna, detail. (*Museum of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence.*)

that had seen the struggle between its memories and its presentiments.

And this was not all. When tragedy broke forth in the depth of the soul, its echoes were heard in the answering voices of sensibility and action. Why should one not taste life to its full when life is so quickly spent, when poison and the knife lie in wait for it at every turn, when meditation is in danger at every moment of being cut short by the ax and the sword of the executioner, when all may well ask themselves in the morning

whether they will be there in the evening. The whole history of the birth and the death of the Italian republics explains the terrible works in which Florence evoked them. Man is always in a state of defense; each individual stands alone, facing the other. The time owes its ardor, its curiosity, its pitiless energy to each one of the dramatic moments in which every mind was part of the living succession. It was in this fire, in which Italy consumed herself, that she tempered the modern soul. Everything that we know emanates from this as straight as the sunbeam that brings us warmth. We have maintained ourselves by this fire for a long time; the lesson is immortal. There is nothing great but has its source in sorrow and strife.

The whole drama is so real in the work of Donatello that one would think he had no precursor and no successor in Florence. When one has meditated before his tense figures, one forgets that the wise goldsmith Ghiberti had already chiseled the doors of the Baptistery into elegant groups wherein the overdeveloped sentiment of form and of decorative life seems to open a beautiful book of images above the bloody pavements to captivate the eye of the hard children who pass by, and to turn them from their path. But close at hand, Donatello is working. The warfare of the streets rumbles under his window, its clamor pierces his flesh, and his will to be calm lifts the marble and the bronze into motionless attitudes in which the steel springs of his mind are stretched to the breaking point. The blade burns in its scabbard. The fury of the city boils in the stoic heart of this son of an agitator expelled from Florence after the riot of the Ciompi. The metal obeys him just as clay does. He twists it, stretches it, and drapes it according to the direction of the fierce



DONATELLO. David. (*Museo Nazionale, Florence.*)

impulses of his logical mind, impulses which he still manages to keep within the inflexible lines of a harmony as sure and as sharp as the edge of his chisel. The more one feels his dignity and simplicity, the more his firm spirit seems bent upon forgetting the hatreds and temptations of life, and the more the storm of life, working from within outward, carves his implacable figures. They do not make a gesture, they do not move, but the inner being, revealed by the stiff legs, the enervated hands, and the faces molded by passion, bursts forth with immeasurable energy. The wrecked figures of the prophets whose brows hang over the city, the half-naked old men whose skulls and arms are withered and hard as the ground of the desert, are not the only ones who bear the weight of his anger. Those violent women, saber in hand, whose feet are tense in the blood they have spilled, are convulsed with his passion. He contracts the faces of men—warriors, thinkers, merchants—whose savage appetites have tightened their muscles, twisted their mouths, deepened their eye sockets, broadened their jaws, and forced the planes of the bones to sustain the pressure of their soul, as the crust of the earth yields to the fire at its center. He stifles his young men in their steel armor—they are rigid, thin, and of “a terrible pride”;<sup>1</sup> he leans heavily upon those children whose faces wear their fixed expression of laughter, or who wave garlands of flowers as they dance their round. From the cradle tossed about on the roads of exile to the tomb hollowed out by the lance, everywhere the conflict of the new feelings and the ancient certitudes attains its most tragic moment. We see the trace of it in those great equestrian statues in which military force itself weighs

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<sup>1</sup> Vasari.



down and resounds on the pavement, in those fierce visages which he hollowed out to the very heart, in all those bodies of flame and of nerves and in the clearly

seen bone structures and the convulsive masks. The sculptor knows too much or not enough.



DONATELLO. Tabernacle of the  
Annunciation, detail.  
(*Santa Croce, Florence.*)

It is in this respect, far more than through the subtleties of the craft or the formulas of the studio, that all his pupils resemble Donatello. A harp of iron seems to be playing of itself somewhere in space, and all listen to it with their eyes closed and their fists clenched, so that they may convey to the bronze or the marble the throb

of the rhythms by which it makes their pulses beat. The whole of the Donatellian cycle is wrung with anguish. That taut energy and that hard style do not come from the master: they were there before his work was begun, they surround him and survive him like the devouring city in which the frenzy of life burns through the generations. This is surely the work of Florence. Lucca is not far away, and yet its sculptor,

Matteo Civitali—who certainly knew the work of Donatello, since he was the contemporary of his youngest pupils—recalls the unknown Roman, who sculptured the “Great Vestal,” by his plenitude, his calm, his robust and settled accent. Nowhere else had such a dramatic conception of maternity been seen: these clutching hands, this furious tenderness of the mothers, the savagery, the brutality, and the violence of the children. One sees clearly that an idea is arising, with the wild love of the world as the fruit of its brain. All—the della Robbias, Desiderio da Settignano, Mino da Fiesole, Michelozzo, Antonio Rosselino, and Benedetto da Majano—are consumed by the desire to express more than they are able and uncompromisingly to affirm moral realities which are not yet quite matured in them. With Desiderio—a living fire—the children themselves suffer, are grave, interrogate life, and ask themselves why they were born. With the gentle Mino da Fiesole, their very laugh is forced. When Luca della Robbia makes them dance, sing, or play music, they dance, sing, or play with a kind of sadness. The rhythmic beating of their feet and their hands seems to have a nervous jerkiness. Andrea della Robbia nails them up over the door of a hospital, with their little arms stretched stiffly and their little fists clasped, calling for the protection of the passer-by. And both artists find that bronze and marble do not suffice to translate their unbridled idealism. And so we get raw greens, loud blues and reds, and varnished terra-cottas of atrocious and seductive taste. . . . A people of diseased thinkers, of madmen and martyrs.

The unity of life, as one of the strong beliefs of the Middle Ages, had weakened. It had not yet penetrated the hopes of the new times. The path which Masaccio

had traced was arduous and dangerous. Italy hesitates to love form for itself, not knowing whether in it she would again find the spirit, although Francis of Assisi, a century before, had told her with so much eloquence that she would. Whither should she turn to appease her fever? Religions and philosophies are a pretext for expending our energy. Life asks only a compass in which to expand at its ease. Where shall it be found? The condition here was somewhat similar to that which arose twelve or fifteen hundred years earlier, at the moment when the pagan world and the Christian world met in conflict at Alexandria. Only the evolution took the opposite course. Donatello, because he felt the analysis gnawing him and kept midway between the lost equilibrium and the equilibrium foreseen, lived over again the ardent, fanatical, and disillusioned humanity of that time. In painted statues he described the frightful ascetics who left the cities, hiding their dishonored bodies under their matted hair, and seeming to live only in their eyes, that flamed with fever. A pure symbol and, without doubt, unconscious. Yet in these images he expressed the deeper aspect of the Florentine soul more closely even than Verrochio, who set up his harsh *condottiere* of iron on a high pedestal, or modeled with nerveless fingers his lean David, the boy who conquers through the strength of his soul—and who is sad at having conquered.

It is in the great violent work of Donatello that the sharp intellectualism of Florentine art is affirmed for the first time. By means of the mind he will try to adapt men to the reasoning world that was taking the ascendant. His is to be the tragic destiny of dying before his work is concluded, but by his death he will



DONATELLO. Statue of Gattamelata, detail. (*Padua.*)

pave the way for a victorious conclusion. How did it come about that he did not reach his goal sooner



DONATELLO. St. Sebastian, bronze  
plaquette.

(*Musée Jacquemart-André.*)

amid the intense life that presented itself to his sight? One must seek the answer in the civic upheaval that incessantly broke and dispersed the movement which he created; one must see it in the debilitating influence of the upper classes who were too rapidly and too artificially cultivated; and again it derives from the meticulous character of the work in which his art originated, the trades of the goldsmith and the

carver, and beyond this in the special aspects of the locality that saw his birth and youth.

#### IV

When one has crossed the Apennines to descend from the planes of the Po into Tuscany, the impression of Bolognese grandiloquence and of Venetian sensuality is suddenly effaced like an interrupted dream. One enters those narrow rings of breasted hills, striped by the horizontal lines of the houses and terraces that seem to have been drawn with the point of a steel blade, while

vertical lines are drawn by the clear-cut trunks of the cypresses and the pines that dominate the rows of white arcades. Against the pallor of the olive trees the cypresses and pines cut an almost black silhouette. The foliage of the oaks has a metallic look; the laurels have leaves of iron; and, against the sky, the cypresses take on the contours of spears. The whole has a stiff and aggressive grace which the sharp north winds from the mountains, playing on the nerves of the inhabitants, make crisper still.

Where the plain is open, the sun colors the mist and the dust that envelops the distance. Facing the valley, the hills rise to the gates of the city and close the horizon. When one climbs the highest terraces, the further reaches of the landscape are sometimes clearer than the first ridge beneath which the sun has already sunk. Whether one considers the lines of Cronaca's palaces or Brunelleschi's, the mauve-colored houses with the green shutters, the river as blue as a knife or the cold violet of the heights against the green mother-of-pearl of the sky, there is nothing so transparent as the daylight of that country, there is nothing so hard as its evening. One sees clear-cut lines, lights, and shadows outlined with a fine thin edge and none of those curves that gently lead the eye from one form to another. The harmonies are limpid and somber, and diamonds appear to be interposed in great numbers between the eye and the landscape. Plastic generalizations do not fall within one's vision, and however keen and subtle the artist may be, he is in danger of limiting himself to expressive or psychological line at the expense of that broad co-ordinated ensemble which, in other countries, will assure to the work of art the movement, the materiality, and the inner force of life.

A passionate draftsman, living—so to speak—in that expressive line which he drove like a weapon into the interstices of the muscles to carve them out under the skin, master of a dry orchestration in his severe fresco wherein the planes are merged no more than those he sees around him, using the hard colors which his graded hills so clearly outlined against the sky, the Florentine never acquired the sense of volume and of the passage in depth that gives birth to the sculptor-peoples and leads the painters, little by little, to express form and space as in a globe. From Masaccio, who had passed his childhood in a part of Tuscany where the setting sun sculptures the mountains with planes of shadow, he inherited only the dramatic sentiment of a world which had reached life midway between dying ideas and ideas not yet fully matured.

It was that passion for line which prevented him from extricating himself completely, even when da Vinci arrived, from a sort of intellectual primitivism, which for a moment he nearly escaped with Gozzoli, and more especially with Ghirlandajo, but into which he was thrown back by the influence of the Platonists and by the morbid genius of Sandro Botticelli. To oppose his need for demonstrating and for abstracting, he would have had to abandon himself to the inclination of his instinct, to have built upon the fiery realism which was the basis of his nature in order naturally to work out the plastic idealism that is foretold in the work of Masaccio. But he was devoured by such a passion for knowing, for discovering and comprehending, that his mind outstripped his senses, and he wore himself out in too often seeking the secret of life outside of the madly intense feeling that he had for it.

The real life of Florence, dramatic and decorative,



PAOLO UCCELLO. *The Profanation of the Host*, detail.  
(*Ducal Palace, Urbino.*)



might have been an inexhaustible source of emotion for the artists if they had turned directly toward that life. The dissociation was barely noticeable in the popular sentiment, whose need for passion was fed by brawls and spectacles. The ideas of the theorists did not touch all the painters, even if all, down to the rudest and simplest, received the burning imprint of the city and of its anguish. The majority of them began by hard work in the goldsmiths' shops of the Ponte Vecchio and in the workrooms of the manufacturers of altar pictures, where gold dust was always flying in the air. They carried their workmen's roughness with them into the circle of the Platonists—and it was their salvation. There was nothing of the *littérateur* about the murderer Andrea del Castagno, a man with a mind as sharp as an ax, who painted his Christ upon the walls as a butcher hangs a piece of meat, who, in the portraits of the soldiers and the poets of Florence, painted forms as tense as his heart, as genuine as his pride, as gigantic as his energy; his cuirasses, his swords, and his black laurels offer us a world of iron, and an implacable hymn of asceticism, vengeance, and love. There was nothing of the pedant about Paolo Uccello, who, with his pure intensity, painted the great red pictures of the tournaments, where companies of knights, their pennants bristling amid the lances, hurled themselves together with a clang of armor and the clash of cavalry. With all the disciplined tumult, the heavy and regular surge of the squadrons, the parallelism of the lances, the great peace of the dark forests in which a hunt is shown, the galloping, the neighing, and the clamor, whether of war or of the chase, the image was a theorem notwithstanding, through its massive rhythm and its dark, dull harmony. One of the workmen of art, and a very

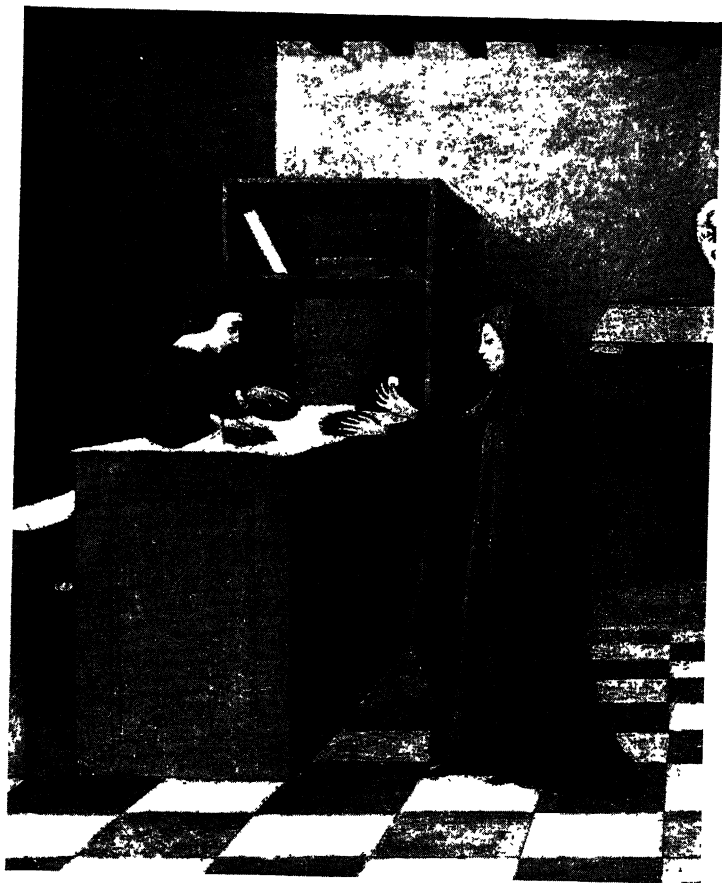
learned one, he spent his days and nights in resolving problems of perspective, and a geometrical order still characterized his pictures even when he bowed his head to observe childhood (never loved more fervently than in Florence) and which he gravely considered. The tragedy of sentiment would not yield to expression



PAOLO UCCELLO. *The Profanation of the Host*, detail of the fresco. (*Ducal Palace, Urbino.*)

otherwise than by the rigorous play of the lines that dominate the form in movement. He paints haunting pictures, apparitions of living shadows against backgrounds that are almost abstract, where the severity of the straight lines—a mechanism that sends the drama back into space or spreads it out—intensifies its nervous force and its pathetic beauty. The powerful dynamics of Uccello will animate the noble age of Italy, through Piero della Francesca and Signorelli first of all, and will continue until the end of Michael Angelo's career.

The universal character of the artist of Florence prevented him, doubtless, from expanding fully. If he had followed his instinct to the end, he would probably have come sooner upon the creative emotion divested of all preoccupation as to the technique to be employed, because the emotion would have absorbed, digested, assimilated that technique by giving it a function in the intelligence and the heart. But because of this pitiless research, the following century gained a force and a grandeur that were to influence all of Europe. The rigorous discipline that the Florentine mind imposed upon itself postponed a realization which in turn it knew it could not hope to achieve by itself. And this discipline excited the curiosity, revealed innumerable energies, and illuminated as to their own value minds which did not know, in the chaotic state of knowledge, where the instrument of liberation was to be found. Leon Battista Alberti was at once architect, painter, geometer, engineer, dramatist, poet, Latinist, and theologian. Brunelleschi, determining the all-powerful action of his immediate disciples, Donatello, Masaccio, and Uccello, really created linear perspective, which permitted his successors to introduce among the geometrical planes the illusion of life unfurling in depth. Cennino Cennini, L. B. Alberti, Ghiberti, Paolo Uccello, Piero della Francesca, Leonardo da Vinci, Cellini, and Vasari had written, were writing, or were to write didactic treatises on architecture, perspective, sculpture, painting, the goldsmith's art, or even the exact or natural sciences, geometry, hydraulics, anatomy, and geology. The artists opened cadavers to become acquainted with the mechanism of matter in movement. Before permitting itself, with Raphael, with Titian, with Michael Angelo, to demand of form its



PAOLO UCCELLO. *The Profanation of the Host*, detail.  
(*Ducal Palace, Urbino.*)

dynamism, to cause it to move in every direction by reason of the necessity for expression, and ever in obedience to its law of continuity, the Italian intelligence had to fix the architectural form, had to try to inscribe its images in the triangle and the circle, and to establish its harmony with receding space and the succession of the planes. It was from the triple effort of the geometers, Uccello, Piero della Francesca, Mantegna, and da Vinci; of the literary painters, Filippo Lippi, Pollaiuolo, and Botticelli; and of the prophets, della Quercia, Masaccio, and Donatello, that Italian art came forth.

The picturesque element, which served only as a pretext, came from Venice and from the nomadic painters, who followed the roads on foot or on horseback, were present at the battles that occurred each day in every mountain pass where the *condottieri* led their bands, stopped in the cities to decorate a baptistery, and started off again to seek their bread. Those were the best ones. Their names were Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, Angelico, Benozzo Gozzoli, Paolo Uccello, Filippo Lippi, Gentile da Fabriano, Piero della Francesca, Luca Signorelli, and Bernardino Pinturricchio. They went from Florence to Pisa, from Pisa to Siena, from Siena to San Gimignano, from San Gimignano to Urbino, from Urbino to Arezzo, from Arezzo to San Sepolcro, from San Sepolcro to Perugia, to Assisi, to Orvieto, to Spoleto, and from Spoleto to Rome. They were workmen; they worked together, transmitting their secrets from one to another; each one painted his wall, another taking up the work of him who was called by death; the palaces, the temples, the municipal buildings, the monasteries, and the cemeteries were covered with paintings; the very façades were decorated; a wonderful hope made all the cities blossom.



FILIPPO LIPPI. The Dance of Salome, detail of the fresco.  
(*Cathedral of Prato.*)

In Lombardy, in Venetia, and especially in Tuscany and Umbria, there are frescoes everywhere; tiny villages have a church or a chapel with paintings; the workers left the studio where they got their training to stay a few months and then remained until their death at the place whither they had gone. At other times, when they got better pay by going to some other place, they did not finish their work. As they believed in themselves, as they had an immense strength, they were not afraid to leave a little of their lives at every stone on the road; the desire for future work was their aim. They were almost all jealous of one another, but it was not because of the money. Each one believed that he had within him the most beautiful work of all, and from effort to effort rose to conquer. What an opening on life, in those times when life was always a menace, they found in this comradeship of the trade, these rivalries of the intelligence, and also in these adventures of the road unknown to the inhabitants of cities and to painters with fixed positions! Every day they had to yield to or resist the lure of the landscape through which they were passing, the broils which they witnessed, the princely trains they would meet at the crossroads, and the beautiful creatures in whom a look, a laugh, a gesture of the two arms, or a twist of the hips contained more of eternity than all the systems of æsthetics that clash in the minds of the intellectuals.

Benozzo Gozzoli was able to escape the influence of the writers and the patrons only because he was accustomed to lead that life. When he worked at Pisa or at San Gimignano, he was almost as far from Florence as his master, Angelico, isolated behind the four walls of a cloister, where he strewed with flowers the azure paths of the dream through which the divine white bride was

to pass. His mind flowered like a meadow. He gave peacock wings to the angels mounted on his red clouds or those that gather blood-red roses in his black gardens; and it was not to express their celestial nature, but to render them more beautiful. He admired. He stretched out shining cavalcades across the Florentine countryside, and in it he placed biblical stories, which told how the vintage was made, how war, and what were the feasts and the working days in the time of Cosimo or Lorenzo de' Medici. In his delight he roamed the plains covered with vineyards and bathed by winding rivers that disappear amid the sharp hills; he followed the ribbon of the roads that are bordered by

red houses under clusters of overhanging pines and yew trees; the country is somber and glows like a mirror of green bronze, through which trails the purple of the skies. And when he flooded the fresco with shining colors in which the gold, the green, and the black punctuated the flow of the carmine, it was because he held in his hand an open pomegranate and because, in the morning, to



LUCA DELLA ROBBIA. *The Singers*,  
bas-relief. (*Museum of Santa  
Maria del Fiore, Florence.*)



climb to a group of cypresses from which one saw afar off the blue line of the mountains, he had crossed one of those Tuscan fields of scarlet clover amid which the poppies seem pale. Whether he was under the shade of the trellises where the big, densely clustering grapes overflowed the cane baskets, or whether on the terraces of the villas, he followed the thin shadow of the



LUCA DELLA ROBBIÀ. Bas-relief, detail.  
(*Museo Nazionale, Florence.*)

lemon trees that border the marble balustrade where the peacocks spread their tails, or whether he placed bread and wine and fruit on a white tablecloth, the world never seemed to him completely to respond to the symphonies whose splendor filled his enchanted eyes. He was a rich spirit, indeed, tenderly ironical in his wonder at legends and at the sight of labor—but he was, first of all, a painter. Not only was he the

colorist of Florence, but perhaps also the first, among all the modern painters of Europe, to venture upon a radical transposition of the colors of nature. The lyrical note in painting results when a logical universe is created from imaginary elements whose intricate relationships lead the eye back to the intuitive laws that have dictated our idea of harmony.

Had Gozzoli been acquainted with Persian illuminations, one might believe that he had enlarged them to the dimensions of the walls, adding to them a sense of distance and saturating them with the essences of the growing fields that throw upon the earth those same greenish shadows which the sun leaves as it sinks. Whereas Giotto, in his rapid discovery of the great school of decorative painting, inclosed the essential spaces in a few linear rhythms so simple that they became part of the scheme of the architecture; Tuscan art, from the time of Fra Angelico, returned to the painting of the missal, a thing related to enameled color, to the character of the landscape, and to the characteristic Tuscan need for analysis. Everything that is meticulous and petty in the practice of this craft disappears in the radiance that shone from the heart and the eyes of an Angelico or a Gozzoli. But among those men whom Florence held in her power, men who could not flee her or master her; the double current of miniature painting and of literature misled their native passion. Aureoled angels with the plumage of birds of the Orient bearing long-stemmed lilies are shown against backgrounds strewn with flowers; they walk with jerky, nervous, and bizarre steps toward the complicated Paradises of the Florentine æsthetes. The fashionable painters cut short their investigation and resort to primitive formulas imperfectly assimilated,



AGOSTINO DI DUCCIO. Pilasters of  
the door, detail. (*Church of Sts.  
Andrea and Bernardino,  
Perugia.*)

through which they may more quickly follow the ideas of the writers.

## v

This need affected even those who entered most vehemently into the passionate life of Florence. When one knows the story of Filippo Lippi, his work is astonishing, for it seems built up from those elements in life that we may accept unquestioningly. He was one of those surprising and magnificently impulsive men whom their time pardoned for everything because, in considering their life, it recognized its own instinct. They knew no law except their own desire. A hundred years later, Benvenuto, in a dozen of instances, will not hesitate at murder. Herein is the glory and the danger of the

Italian soul. It goes its full length at a bound. One might say that it has no resting place between crime and heroism. The anarchy of sentiment that weighed so heavily on a Masaccio and a Donatello drove Filippo Lippi to devour life in every direction—he who remained a monk after having seduced the nuns. For him love was a kind of fury. Between two fiery adventures he worked in a state of exaltation; the violent modeling and the red accents of his painting caused the sacred story to burst forth from out the darkness of the chapels and to be inducted into Florentine society, tormented and quivering with the drama that was decomposing it. Around the festivals and the banquets in the palaces, whose low-ceilinged halls are paved with squares of white and black, there glide strange blond women who prolong the age of mysticism to the midst of the magnificent orgy wherein the senses and thought were renewed together. Filippo Lippi marks perhaps the most anxious moment in the life of Florence. Although the painters still search the Scriptures for almost every pretext for manifesting their passion, Humanism, whose work is progressing, has penetrated them. The conflict shifts to another field. It is no longer between their ancient beliefs and the rise of that instinct which urges them on to scrutinize the forms so as to extract the spirit. It is between this living instinct itself and the premature influence of philosophic and literary erudition which pretends to have recovered from the thought of antiquity the food for the new needs that Italy is discovering in herself. With Filippo Lippi, Florentine line becomes enervated, exaggerates its curves, and begins to distort bearing and gesture, the inclination of the head and the twist of the neck on the shoulders, the folds of garments, and



BENOZZO GOZZOLI. The Drunkenness of Noah, detail.  
(*Campo Santo, Pisa.*)

even the form of flowers. All his pupils and even the sculptors, Agostino di Duccio among others, will follow him in this respect. The Platonist spirit, which the élite claims to follow, comes too soon. The Greek soul, with Plato, sustained its generalizations on three hundred years of life that had been lived, felt, and loved for itself, that had developed harmoniously, continuously, in a single direction and without turning back—to reach the climax of its natural ascent in the living idealism of the century of Pericles. Florence bites into a fruit that is too green and that sets her teeth on edge.

And yet it was better for Florence and for Italy to explore the literary ground presented by the Platonists, who were prepared to retrace their steps, than to efface themselves before the works of the past that were offered to them as models. The life of the senses and the passions was, it is true, too strong in them for them to submit to this effacement. In reality there is nothing in Florentine form that recalls the form of the antique, and there is no more relationship between Florentine art and that of the sculptors of Athens or of imperial Italy than there was between the religion and the social rhythm of the Florence of the fifteenth century and Greco-Latin paganism. In the antique the form is as calm and full as Florentine form is sharp and dry and strained. Even when it tries to resemble the art of the dead races, perhaps especially at that moment, Tuscan art remains Tuscan. Whatever the influence of Petrarch and of Humanism—a beneficent influence, since it aroused curiosity, the restlessness of the artists, and a need for analysis which was essential in those times—Italian painting owed nothing to ancient art save the desire to find itself. We must not forget that Italy was still Italy, that although twelve centuries had



BENOZZO GOZZOLI. Paradise, fresco.  
(Palazzo Riccardi, Florence.)

implanted in men a more feverish sensibility, neither its landscapes, nor the products of its soil, nor its climate, had changed, and that it was the genius of their senses which the Italians were obeying when they asked of the ancient world the testimony and the support of a form of intelligence which they felt to be related to their own. Before Petrarch, Dante knew Vergil, for he had asked Vergil to accompany him to the Inferno, and he was on the point of writing his poem in Latin. But life bore him away.

In Italy life conquered everywhere. Italy wrote her poem in a language that responded to her desire. If, after a hundred years of torture, she recovered a form which on its surface recalled the ancient form, it was because the ancient form had been, as the painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was itself, a necessary expression of the Greco-Latin peoples.

For a moment even, in the full tide of Humanism, when Lorenzo de' Medici was organizing and singing his "Triumphs," when the pagan processions were defiling before the Loggia dei Lanzi amid clamors and broils, and when Poliziano was writing his "Stanzas," the Florentine soul seemed to be on the point of arresting in real life, transfigured by a great painter, the evolution that was carrying the Italian genius toward the plastic idealism realized by the artists in the following century. While Botticelli was accentuating what there was of artificiality in the work of Filippo Lippi to the most extreme literary development, Ghirlandajo was singling out from it that part which was most direct and most healthy. We have no image of Florentine life more faithful than that which he left us. And despite his violent drawing, his somewhat confused but powerful orchestrations, despite the accent of his portraits, his



nervous bodies, and the bony legs of the thin figures in which concentrated passion produces a grave, sad, rather haggard character, one cannot say as much for Filippo Lippi. All his life he hesitated and was never able to choose between what he had learned through the work of his father and the opposing influences of Ghirlandajo and of Botticelli. As for the rude Verrochio, the only one of the great contemporaries of these three painters who, like them, fell under the dominating influence of Donatello and of Filippo Lippi, the problems of perspective and anatomical dissection occupied almost his entire time. When he worked at sculpture, he attached more importance to the manner of working the material and of casting the bronze of his statues than he did to the statues themselves, their pride, their passion, their overwhelming brutality. When he worked at painting, he set himself to invent a style as hard as metal, upon coming into contact with the undulating forms of the murmuring landscapes.

Ghirlandajo was the only one to love painting for itself. He alone had that joy of painting which made the glory of Venice and of the Flemings. He regretted that he had not "the circuit of the walls of Florence to cover with painting."<sup>1</sup> With Gozzoli—who had arrived thirty years earlier, though he departed a little later—among all the Florentines, he alone could see the landscapes receding among the hills; he alone knew how to give distance to the great halls with their square-flagged pavements, to the terraces, and to the skies against which one sees the clear-cut profile of the campaniles and the towers. If, unlike Masaccio, he does not seem to have understood the essential rôle of the lights and the shadows, he was the only one who

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<sup>1</sup> Vasari.

tried to unite the former with the latter through atmosphere, through the balancing of groups, through exact values and the planes that give an appearance of the real to the most daring transpositions of plastic art.



MINO DA FIESOLE. Tomb of Tornabuoni, detail.  
(*S. Maria sopra Minerva, Rome.*)

Only he, after Masaccio and until da Vinci—and more than da Vinci perhaps—only he tried to emerge from that intellectual primitivism which constituted the originality and the weakness of Florence. He gained and lost thereby. Of the Italians of his period, he is the one who, by his language, is the nearest to the

great periods. He is the one, perhaps, who is furthest from them in lyricism and in royalty.

He felt no remorse about transporting Christian mythology into the everyday life of the rich citizens



ANTONIO POLLAIUOLO. Bust.  
(*Museo Nazionale, Florence.*)

of his country. Sober during a time when the painters were accumulating their figures without order, harmonizing their tones confusedly, and overloading their compositions with flowers and rich stuffs, he yet knew how to paint the beautiful processions as they passed, how to orchestrate with magnificence their oranges and dull reds, and the lilacs and the greens, and to set, in his white spaces, furniture, the ledge of open windows, baskets of fruits, bouquets, sonorous glasses, and

peacocks spreading into a fan the precious gems of their tails. He understood the young women of Florence whom Filippo Lippi had loved too furiously for him to look upon them in a wholesome way. They walk in their silver-embroidered dresses, their beautiful hands clasped at the waist. They turn toward him their long fine faces, a little sickly, without beauty, but with a

charm so unforeseen, and so grave, with their sad mouth and eyes, the too-slender neck under the weight of the blond tresses which give them the appearance of a flower too heavy for its stem and withering before it has reached full bloom. They chat among themselves, offer their breasts or arms to new-born children, carry linen or baskets, or superintend the affairs of an elegant household. Sometimes they go out upon terraces from which one can see a sober, airy, and precise landscape running back to the horizon, a Tuscan landscape, encumbered with hills, sown with pine trees and tilled fields under a silver sky through which sail the great birds.

There is perhaps no other "intimist" in this passionate Italy whose especial glory is that of having translated the human drama, with the universal drama, into generalizations which were transposed into painting. Like all the Italians, to be sure, Ghirlandajo is a decorator. His style is too tense for him to tell the story of evening peace and the meals in the home. He is restless; drama is afoot. The man who was most in love with silence and the hearth does not escape the genius of his race. From a people that lives in the street or that leans out of the windows when it hears the noise of broils, of songs, of talk, and festivals, that frequently beholds the spectacle of acts of violence or of love, from an expressive and living crowd whose mimicry is another language, that understands everything and causes everything to be understood instantaneously, that is amused and roused to passion simultaneously or successively by the speeches of the orators and the tradesmen of the streets, from such one must not ask that the sources of its emotion and its means of activity be sought in the discreet calm of family life.

Passion reveals truth and heroism along paths that are sometimes more painful to follow, but which are as sure as those of meditation.

Be that as it may, Ghirlandajo carried the nervous line of Filippo Lippi back into Florentine life, and



MATTEO CIVITALI. The Madonna and Child. (*Santa Trinità, Lucca.*)

almost reached the point of incorporating it with the volumes in his paintings and with space. It is an astonishing effort for that moment, when Botticelli, on the contrary, was trying to extricate that line from living matter so as to give a factitious animation to the literary abstractions of Florentine intellectualism. We know that Ghirlandajo had nine children, of whom several were painters and his pupils, that he worked ceaselessly; and

Vasari tells us that he possessed "an invincible courage." When one compares this life with the perpetual restlessness, the painful incoherence, and the agitation of Botticelli's life, which was lived "each day for itself,"<sup>1</sup> one understands the contrast better.

<sup>1</sup> Vasari.

On the one hand, a great workman, a certain bourgeois heaviness, not much lyricism, but a great deal of strength and of knowledge; on the other hand, "a brain fashioned in the alembic of an alchemist,"<sup>1</sup> a wild desire, continually shattered by life, to surpass and to forget life. With Botticelli the quivering line of Donatello and of Lippi follows only the complicated, abstract, and—in reality—thoroughly obscure direction of a sensibility that feeds on rotting food. It intensifies its curves and its angles; with each new work it exaggerates the twist of limbs and of heads and seems to seek in the bare bodies of the young men and young women of Florence the marks of a decline, that is smiting the energy of the city. Antonio Pollaiuolo, at about the same hour, with the same intellectual perversity and the same nervous acuteness, but with less imagination, was making strange researches into color, mingling precious and rare tones to give an effect like that of the mottling of stagnant waters. Italian passion was whirling out of its orbit. Humanism, gathering from the work of Plato the almost withered flower of the soul of antiquity, had destroyed its perfume. The Florentine intellectual, because he had desired to begin at the place where Greece left off, found himself obliged to transport himself to an artificial sphere from which the vibrant and living element furnished by our inexhaustible world was banished. The natural symbolism of the poets of the Middle Ages lived again as a hothouse plant, unknown and miserable, and doomed to die at its first contact with the burning atmosphere from out-of-doors.

There is not an artist who expresses this intellectual tragedy with more distress than does Sandro Botticelli, though he does not know it himself; his was a volup-

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<sup>1</sup> Vasari.



VERROCCHIO. David, bronze. (*Museo Nazionale, Florence.*)

tuous imagination, but an unhealthy one also, and it tortured itself until the end because it did not find itself in accord with the living universe, which it desired without knowing how to do so. He discovered the mystery of the woods and the meadows, the fecundity of the sea, and the wildness of the wind. His desire for naked beauty was so feverish that even before looking at it, he twisted and burned it in the flames of his desire. He loved flowers so much that he caused them to rain from the sky when he found none on the earth. But they exhaled the mortuary odor of dead flowers. It was in vain that he wove them into crowns and garlands, that he loaded roses

and pinks, hyacinths, and bluebells upon the black trees, upon the lawns, the breezes, the gauzy dresses, and the flying hair of the slender androgynes by means of which he attempted to bring back to his canvases the springtime of the past; the forsaken Venuses, all the goddesses of forests and springs in



GHIRLANDAJO. *The Visitation*, fresco. (*Santa Maria Novella, Florence.*)

whom he no longer believed, the fruits, the flowers, and the accumulation of nude forms only accentuated his impotence to restore to life its blending force. An artificial work, undecided, painful, and abortive, the saddest in the history of painting.

And yet one of the most noble. The intense restlessness that one feels in it does no more than accentuate the aspiration toward an intellectual harmony which a less literary and more plastic culture would have permitted him to achieve. If the man's mind is poisoned by it, his instinct is ever pure and grave, and



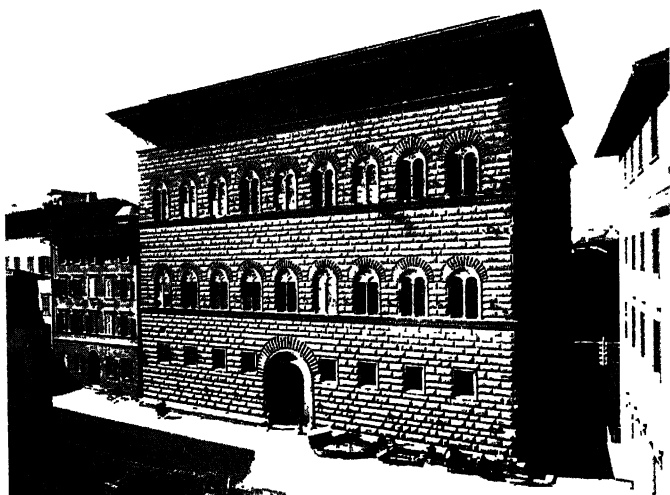
amid this culture the artist seems crucified by his continued vain effort to wrest his ever-living faith from the complications ever ready to arise in his ill-balanced intelligence. The walk and the dance, the passing processions, the urge toward love and our love of childhood, all that transforms the fairest impulses of the heart into gesture, all of that preserves, nevertheless, a spiritual majesty in his work, which the strangest movement and the most bizarre composition are not sufficient to mask. Botticelli is the victim of the æsthetes of his time, and of our time, too. The former perverted him. The latter misunderstood him. His destiny remains tragic. His posthumous glory wills it so, as did his art itself and his life and his death.

This great imaginative spirit, who lacked nothing of the great man save simple humanity, ended his life, sick and corrupted, in religious orders. This is the usual fate of men whose sensibility is too acute for them to submit to the discipline of their weak intelligence. He was among the first and earliest of the Renaissance painters to mingle Aphrodites and Virgins—the pagan gods, in whom he believed only through literary diletantism, with the Christian gods to whom he returned in a spirit of discouraged mysticism—and he suffered for doing so. Even in this he found no rest. He illustrated the *Inferno* of Dante with convulsive drawings that make one think of a dance of madmen in the nave of a cathedral. In desperation he followed Savonarola who was arousing Florence against the spirit of moral disintegration and of elegant corruption brought about by the coming of tyranny and the reign of analysis—of which his work had clearly been the manifestation. Standing beside the terrible monk he must, doubtless, have burned the



GHIRLANDAJO. Birth of St. John the Baptist, fresco, detail.  
(*Santa Maria Novella, Florence.*)

books, slashed the pictures, and have brought certain of his own works to be thrown into the flames. Savonarola, who insisted that the painters return to the æsthetics of Fra Angelico, surely did not dream that the work of the good friar was one of the sources of the necessary evil which he swore to extirpate. He knew well that the form is conquered by the spirit whenever



BENEDETTO DA MAJANO. (*Palazzo Strozzi, Florence.*)

they conflict, but he had no idea that the spirit is conquered by the form when it demands that form express it; he knew that divine truth resides nowhere else but in the equilibrium between the form and the spirit, the equilibrium always aimed at, always approximated, always destroyed, and always hoped for when it is destroyed again. His love for Angelico was again, as ever, that idolatry through which, three centuries earlier, Francis of Assisi had delivered Italy.

## VI

It was doubtless too late or too soon for Florence to reach conclusions. The Republic, distracted by civil war, rendered anæmic by tyranny, enervated by intellectualism, by murder and love, had been passing through unexpected crises from a spirited atheism to a febrile mysticism, with merely an almost exhausted energy to offer to the Italian soul. At the end of her history Florence still retained her primitive language, and that primitive language was already dull because it had been used to express too many sensations, and worn out, because it had served too many intelligences. The last of her great painters vainly fled the harsh city in his attempt to break the diamond matrix in which she imprisoned all hearts. Although he was ahead of his time, although he was, by the extent and penetration of his analysis, the first of modern minds, he remains a primitive at base, an old primitive very learned and disenchanted, something like a germ of life already savoring of the cadaver.

The Florentine line, that abstract and almost arbitrary line which da Vinci now contrives to unite with volume until, as it merges into contour, it is confused with the diminution of the light and the beginning of shadow—this line is always felt to be present, pressing like a ring of metal upon skulls, faces, shoulders, arms, and hands, forcing the form to bend under its embrace so as to describe it in depth. One feels that, unlike Masaccio, who looked on life in the mass and who sculptured it on his canvas with the force of his lights and shadows, Leonardo took a section of life, followed it in its accidents, its relations with surrounding life, and its course through space, and never lost sight of



BOTTICELLI. Spring, detail. (*Galleria Antica e Moderna, Florence.*)

the line that described the projections, the hollows, and the undulations which were born of his pursuit of that line. One feels—and this is why he remains a primitive despite his incalculable power—one feels that it is through knowledge that he succeeds in surrounding his sculptured masses with air and in sending back to a distance, in plane after plane, the blue backgrounds of shattered rocks, of mountains, of sinuous roads, and slender trees that live with an artificial life, like a theorem clinging to an emotion. Gozzoli and Ghirlandajo, intuitively, through their sense of exact values, sent their landscapes back to the horizon with more success than da Vinci did, immersed as he was in perspective and mathematics. It is in his mind that the relationships of the world live, even more so than in his senses, and much more than in his heart.



FILIPPINO LIPPI. Portrait of the Artist, detail. (*Church of the Carmine, Florence.*)

With this astounding man who founded or foresaw all the future sciences together, to whom the arts of sculpture and painting seem to be no more than human applications of the abstract ideas which he had drawn from the study of geometry, perspective, mechanics,



BOTTICELLI. The Dance, fresco, detail. (*Villa Galetti, near  
Florence.*)

alchemy, geology, hydraulics, anatomy, and botany, experimentation was of equal importance with the intuition that he possessed to the highest degree; his intuition was of the kind that creates life, the intuition that is inherent in every great artist, is sovereign to such a degree that it first instigates and then halts the infinite number of conscious or unconscious researches that pre-



BOTTICELLI. Sacrifice of the Leper, detail. (*Sistine Chapel*.)

pared its explosion. He is perhaps the only man in whom science and art were merged through their means of expressing thought, since they tend to unite, in their common need, to establish the continuity of the laws of nature in the domain of the mind.

Look at his drawings of machines, his anatomical drawings, his drawings of muscles and of flowers. They are the exact and minute representation of the machine, of the muscles, of the flowers. They have also that



mysterious tremor, that radiant and secret expression which one sees in his strange, charming, or hard faces that may mean so many things under the rain of the hair that curls to the bare shoulders and to the bare breasts where the artist's line, with each succeeding stroke, draws forth from beneath the skin the silent movement of the inner life. The Italian artists of the fifteenth century had done well to explore the nature of the cadaver, to study the course of the tendons, the projections of the bones, the infinite flow of the nerves, the veins, and the arteries. Even at the cost of a certain confusion, even at the cost of certain conflicts between enthusiasm which creates and observation which disillusion, it was necessary for humanity, little by little, to draw from analysis the consciousness of unity; it had to learn how to discover that the flame which glows in the depths of human eyes sleeps in the heart of all forms, that it causes the trees to tremble to the tips of their leaves, that it is in the wings of the birds, the elytra of the insects, in the living muscles and in the dead bones, that it passes from the vibrations of the atmosphere into the murmuring of the brooks and even into the life of stones. On the day when Cellini uttered his artist's admiration for the vertebræ and the bones of the pelvis, he spoke in the name of two centuries which lived to demonstrate to us that all the forms of knowledge may show us how to master and to increase the growth of our mind. "The more one knows," said Leonardo, "the more one loves."

He knew. In his eyes the form was no more than the symbol of a higher intellectual reality whose fleeting direction and infinite character were translated by the smile on a face or the gesture of a hand. It is a conception which, in order to remain plastic, needs to be



LEONARDO DA VINCI. Mona Lisa, drawing. (*Musée de Chantilly.*)

supported upon a formidable, narrow, and implacably objective knowledge of the material of which life is made. It seems as if he had understood everything. His "Bacchus" is the father of his "Saint John the Baptist." The old dogmas and the new sentiments



LEONARDO DA VINCI. Study.  
(Academy, Venice.)

were, with him, no longer in conflict. He accepted the world. He divined great things. In the "Leda," where the wing of the swan followed with its embrace the line like that of a lyre, which starts from the living arm, from the warm, round breast to descend to the bare feet, there is, in the grass, a broken egg from which children have just come forth and are picking flowers.

He perceived the common source and the eternal circle of things. He descended to the profoundest depths of nature, with only his senses as the intermediary between the outer universe regarding which they gradually reported to him and the inner universe which controlled their agitation. And when he raised his eyes to corroborate, from the faces and attitudes of men, the results of his own meditation,

he observed that their faces and their attitudes were a result of the contact of their living mind with the living mind of the things that surrounded them.

That is the reason why, in his great picture of the "Last Supper," where the inner drama creates its wave of



LEONARDO DA VINCI. The Adoration of the Magi. (*Uffizi.*)

life and twists and sculpts the forms like trees in a hurricane, we find the loftiest work of active psychology in the history of painting. He had the power to penetrate under every surface, to the depths of every human skull, of living through its intimate tragedy, of infusing the tragedy into the gestures which it dictated, and of

uniting all the movements of serenity and of revolt, of swift advance and of recoil, of reserve and of abandon into a single movement of the mind. With him it is a psychological arabesque that we get, transcribed by the form.

Da Vinci could seize the same smile in the eyes and on the lips of all the beings that came forth from his mind and insnare the movement of their fingers, outstretched toward the same invisible point, as if to indicate to the future the doubt which he felt within him. His painting, which is without mystery, is the mystery of painting—one of the human mysteries. In him, all the science amassed by the century flowers into poetry, and his science was composed of all the poetry which his precursors have strewn about them. In an epoch when Platonist idealism, which he ceaselessly combated, had misled intelligence, he had the sense of real life which alone leads to the grandest abstractions. He had the gentleness of wisdom and had acquired it at a time when the life of impulse was loosed upon the world. Skeptical and disillusioned at a time when minds susceptible of discontent were rushing back to the beliefs of the old days, he attained, through his lofty reason, to the threshold of that confused sentiment in which new religions are born, when humanity has rejected all the dogmas on which its certitude reposed. And he, who claimed that there is no science save that which may be translated into mathematical symbols, is the man who translates what he knows into almost inscrutable plastic poems in which, perhaps in spite of himself, intuition guides his hand.

There is nothing in the world more vivifying and more discouraged, more ambiguous and more intelligent, more defined and more infinite than his work. It



LEONARDO DA VINCI. Saint Anne and the Virgin, drawing.  
(*Burlington House, London.*)

is the whole of Florence, from Masaccio to Botticelli—its fiery analysis, its hasty synthesis, its line penetrating to the heart and dissecting the brain; it is everything that she suffered, everything that she hoped to give to us; and the whole of it concentrates in this immense and secret soul which never opens to us completely. Da Vinci embodied within him the torment of Florence and he did not consent, any more than she did, to tell us everything that he had learned therefrom.

It was apart from da Vinci, apart from the Florence which he himself had abandoned and at the hour of her decline, that the Renaissance was to find its clearest expression. The historical rôle of the Italian republics, if one excepts Venice, was finished. Exhausted by their internal struggles and by the unbridled indulgence of the freedom of their passions, they had reached the end of their capacity for effort. Their individualism, having exhausted the individual, delivered them over to tyranny. They had lost the spring and the pride that took the place of social bonds among them; they had lost the idea of the dignity of existence and the sense of living righteousness. Already the prey of the *condottieri*, they appealed now to Spain, now to France, who, themselves having achieved unity, profited by it to force themselves on Italy, whose people no longer believed in the heroism of her destiny.

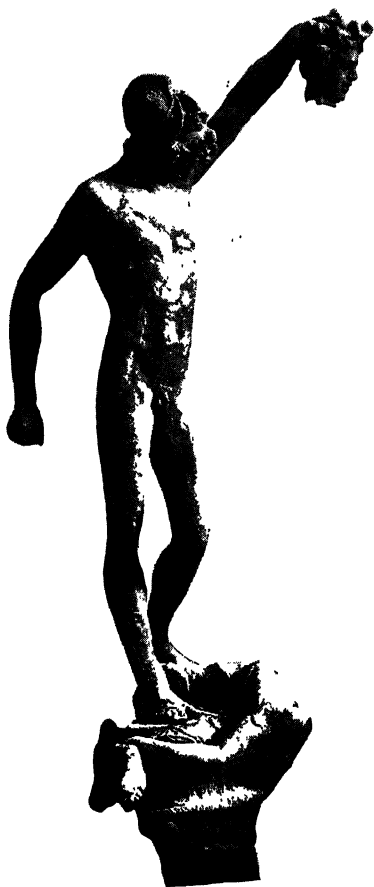
And yet, the confused sentiment which had guided the Renaissance demanded consummation. If it had lost its early sweep, it retained the speed that it had acquired. All it sought was favorable ground for its unfolding. At Rome, the Pontificate offered a rather precarious shelter, but the only one that remained in the storm, except Venice, where Italy mingled with the Orient to infuse a magnificent life into the men who



LEONARDO DA VINCI. Bacchus, detail. (*Louvre.*)



had grown up in the wake of her triumphal movement. Florence, where Leonardo had passed no more than his



BENVENUTO CELLINI. Perseus, wax.  
(*Museo Nazionale, Florence.*)

youth, obeyed until the end the singular destiny which renders her such an incomparable focus of intellectual initiation, but where the mind seems to be prohibited—perhaps because of the too-numerous excitements and problems that besiege it—from achieving its accord with the elements of feeling and sense which could bring about a definitive harmony. It was merely to light his flame that Raphael came there; Michael Angelo, who was trained there, returns only during times of crisis—once to defend the city, once to sculpture some tombs. Those who

remain Florentines, Albertinelli, Piero di Cosimo, Lorenzo di Credi himself, so tender, so discreet, and so unusual, still belong in the line of the primitives



FILIPPO PALADINI. *The Sister of Mercy, detail. (Hospital of Pistoia.)*

who had been intellectualized too quickly. And those among her last painters who, after Leonardo and thanks to him, attain a larger conception of form, who see it free of its early fetters, full and surrounded by space—the gentle Fra Bartolommeo or the pure Andrea del Sarto—are precisely the men who have lost that restless ardor which characterized Tuscan art. With them and after them, intelligence still remains the weapon of Florence, but it is an intelligence that has mistaken its rôle through allowing sentiment to be effaced; it is an intelligence that takes the means for the end and exhausts itself in seeking the form outside of the inner drama that determines its function. The formulas reached by the two masters of Rome have such a masculine power of seduction that Tuscan art must needs attempt to employ them as the frame for its weakening sentiment. The violence of Benvenuto, which he too often expended in outward acts, the proud and sensual elegance of Giovanni da Bologna, and the severity of Bronzino are not the right qualities for their hands, which now handle tools with excessive ease. Florence, subjected and fallen, can do no more than brood over her melancholy passion in the bitter gardens where the shadow of the roses makes the water of the fountains tremble at the foot of San Miniato.



ROME

## Chapter II. ROME AND THE SCHOOL

### I



WHEN the popes, at the end of the fourteenth century, returned from Avignon, Rome was a dead city. Some thousands of miserable people camped amid the circuses that had been invaded by briars and nettles, amid the shattered aqueducts and the gutted baths. Life round about was at work in the free cities. But here, nothing lived. Certain popes, touched by the spirit of Humanism, tried to create a center of attraction through which a few wandering artists, not one of whom becomes the founder of a line, will consent to pass. It is Florence and Umbria that furnish the court of Rome with the architects and painters whom it calls in to build and

decorate its churches: Gentile da Fabriano, Bernardino Rossellino, Piero della Francesca, Benozzo Gozzoli, Melozzo da Forlì, and Bramante. The inner activity of Rome will never be sufficient to supply her needs. When artists are born in Rome, we shall find that they are men of diffuse and empty mind, such as are demanded by idle societies to amuse them in their laziness and to flatter their vanity.

But it is the only shelter open to the Italian soul as it is about to ripen. At the moment when Florence succumbs, when Charles VIII, disguised as the champion of order, descends into Italy, da Vinci fertilizes Milan and is about to reveal to France the already exploded profundity of Tuscan passion. Giorgione, in a form that has attained almost its complete expansion, ushers in the whole of Venice, where Titian is appearing. The old land of Umbria is being animated anew and is looking toward Rome. The Italian artist is seeking to free himself from formulas and to spread his liberty about him. When Julius II, the warrior and artist-pope, addresses himself to the architect Bramante, who is soon to summon his young relative Raphael, and calls Michael Angelo from Florence less than two years afterward, it is the spirit of the period that inspires him. Amid the general anarchy which delivers the Italian communes over to the foreigner, and confronted by Venice's policy of protection, Rome is indeed the only place where Italy can sum up her desires.

Rome has such strength through the sadness of her horizon, her isolation at the center of a desert of reeds and grasses, her vast ruins, and the weight of her history, that she did not permit the masters who had spent their youth in distant places to bring Italy to her



GENTILE DA FABRIANO. *The Adoration of the Magi*, detail.  
(*Galleria Antica e Moderna, Florence.*)

without first compelling them to accept that disciplining of the will by means of which she could, after so many storms, still dominate the world. She obliged Bramante to recognize this force; she infused it into the fragile Raphael; she made it the habitual food of Michael Angelo. Like Brunelleschi, a hundred years earlier, Bramante lived in the ruins, compass in hand. It was there that he recovered the laws of Roman architecture and of all architecture, the subordination of the organ to the function, which the despotic and fantastic mind of Michael Angelo—when he himself succeeded to the direction of the building of Saint Peter's—could not apply to the problems of construction, but which, in the voluntary and rigorous inelasticity of his powerful intellect, he found again when he came to design the façade and the court of the Palazzo Farnese, a theorem of stone in which the tragic spirit of the world appears in Italy for the last time. Raphael and Michael Angelo could study the mutilated statues which were daily torn from the earth by the excavators, and the possession of which was contested by the Pope and the Roman princes. This hourly contact with the Rome of antiquity could not fail to react upon sensibilities which, like these, summarized two centuries of waiting and working.

But neither could it pervert them. They came from the heart of the race with too great an outburst and through too great a necessity for them to deviate from the path that it laid out for them. The intellectual idealism of Florence, the sentimentalism of the Umbrian painters, and the sensuality of Venice, which Sebastiano del Piombo brought to Rome, were spontaneously amalgamated with the will of the masons and the statue makers of the Empire who built the

aqueducts, the thermæ, and the circuses, and who carved upon the arches of triumph the rude bas-reliefs upon which the Roman genius had stamped its imprint. For a moment, the whole Italian soul found its realization. Never had a passion equal to this one, wherein



PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA. *The Finding of the Holy Cross*, fresco, detail. (*San Francesco, Arezzo.*)

violence and gentleness, voluptuousness and asceticism, science and enthusiasm, clashed and merged in turn, accepted a similar frame without being crushed by so severe a discipline.

The Renaissance brought back form, full, sculptural, and athletic—not at all the Greek form, but rather the Roman in the predominance given to the projections of the muscles as a means of expression—but a form lifted up by such ardor that it remained wholly Italian while opening up new epochs. Never had so much



matter and spirit been welded together to recreate life in its highest unity.

When we go as far back as the currents which lead to Raphael, it is only to his education in Rome that we can attribute the rise in him of that force of which he would probably have remained ignorant had he not left Urbino or had he continued to live at Perugia or even in Florence. For in that tender and almost feminine nature which his apologists have exalted in a way that brings despair to the hearts of those who love him best, there was a masculine power which doubtless helped to arouse Michael Angelo, and which unfolded with the ease, the authority, and the amplitude of things that mature naturally. Never did any man unite so many scattered and almost antagonistic elements, assimilating them with his inmost substance and giving them forth again in his work—living and spreading out freely and high above its sources while retaining all their freshness.

Beginning with the end of the fourteenth century, Umbria, from which we must consider that he came—for his sixteenth year was probably not yet passed when he entered the studio of Perugino—Umbria had grafted upon the old Sienese school a very living branch, even though it is apt to escape our attention because of the splendor shed by the great fire of Florence. With its back to the mountains, but descending with all its cities toward the gentle plain, Umbria had a soul whose piety is the greater because the proximity of Rome so frequently exposed it to invasion. It was in the heart of Umbria, in sight of Perugia, that Francis of Assisi was born; it was Umbria that first followed him. In an attenuated form, the light of that spirit still floated over its valleys.



PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA. The Queen of Sheba, fresco,  
detail. (*San Francesco, Arezzo.*)

Florence, and even Siena, were sufficient to themselves. Perugia was too distant from the great centers of the elaboration and of the influence of Italian energy to retain the artists that expressed it. It was toward Rome that almost all of them gravitated, bringing with them something of Siena, which had first instructed them, something of Florence whither, in general, they went to be initiated; and, by way of Urbino, Bologna, and Ferrara, bringing with them a little of Padua and Venice. Pisanello, the Veronese, after having received in Florence the lessons of Andrea del Castagno, collaborated, in Rome, with Gentile da Fabriano, the Umbrian, whose art had been formed by the Sienese. Gentile preserved their memory of the Byzantine mosaics and their blond faces with the slanting eyes; but in Rome, and more especially in Venice, he had seen the passing of the processions made splendid by the brilliance of the costumes. Of an abounding imagination, he had more curiosity than the masters of Siena, and, with a sense of movement and a love of the picturesque which they, in their gravity, could not have endured, he possessed the expansive piety of Umbria, so different from their jealous mysticism. Benozzo Gozzoli, when he worked at Rome, as he had worked practically in every part of Italy, suddenly became acquainted with this work and gained from it, in part, his taste for the exotic and his Oriental perfume.

In Rome he doubtless saw also the work of Piero della Francesca. That great painter, a nomadic artist, like all those who came to Rome at that period, was but little older than himself. His schematic landscapes certainly lived on in the memory of Gozzoli, when he covered the walls of the Campo Santo of Pisa with the

red paintings in which the delicate countrysides, traversed by the Florentines, sink into its horizons. But the nature of Gozzoli is as fantastic as that of Piero is severe and homogeneous. Moreover, though he came from a region which borders on Umbria, one more mountainous and wild, it is true, his contrast with the masters of that province is one of the astounding things which characterize Italy from Dante and Giotto to Michael Angelo and Raphael, and which contrast Machiavelli with Francis of Assisi. Piero painted sharp profiles that seem hollowed out in copper, robes embroidered



PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA. *The Dream of Constantine*, drawing.  
(*British Museum.*)

with flowers as pointed as thorns, and great austere figures isolated by a pure line. Horizontal clouds were gathered in a sky where the divine dove stretched out rigid wings. A terrible majesty lifted the children of his mind above the brows of other men. His angelic musicians seemed like caryatids made to uphold the sonorous vault that invisibly extended over the gloomy highway. The deep tones of their violins were carried over into his harmonies. When he painted war, he was as hard as war; when he painted the night, one saw nothing of it save a cuirass, the point of a



PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA. Battista Sforza, Duchess of Urbino.

lance, and the faces of the sleepers. His mind was such as would be formed by the methodical and tenacious study of all the exact sciences then known. He wrote treatises on perspective. He tried to subordinate nature to the geometrical principles that had formed his mind. Thus the fusion of the living element which our sensibility reveals to us, and of the mathematical element into which our intelligence leads us, came about in his work—the strongest expression of the fierce insistence with which the Italians sought the absolute agreement between science and art; with him, the manner of seeking this accord is stricter than with Paolo Uccello, less factitious than with da Vinci.



PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA. *Malatesta*, detail. (*Cathedral of Rimini.*)

The figures in his frescoes are built one above the other like houses, with an architecture so powerful that the torsos and the shoulders, the arms, and the heads dominating the necks seem to be determined by exact calculation. Cylindrical torsos, broad shoulders, round arms, necks like columns, and spherical heads whose eyes look straight before them. One thinks of his personages almost as statues walking or kneeling, and the energy that erects them pours into their full form with the

weight of brass. It is as pure and strong as the antique. Not one among the noble Italians, not Giotto, nor della Quercia, nor Masaccio, nor Michael Angelo expresses what is proudest in our unique adventure of



MELOZZO DA FORLÌ. Fresco. (*Church of the Holy Apostles, Rome.*)

life with greater heroism than that of Piero. He is perhaps the greatest among those invincible men who, through all the storms, oppressed by passion, resorting to murder if necessary, and accepting life as an everyday drama, went onward, their eyes fixed on something higher and more tragic that lay eternally ahead of them, something which they felt in their resolute and des-

perate hearts. He goes through the world in company with the heroes of his frescoes, pitiless, pure as force, and inaccessible to resignation. The trunk of the tree is bare, the leaves are motionless, but something is rising and diffusing itself everywhere, a burning central sap that holds them erect and makes them hard. The somber earth itself seems to be formed of curves which the subterranean fire has fitted one into the other, as if to obey some rational power which co-ordinates its efforts. There is no more sublime work in Italy. And it is a decisive moment. Rome and Tuscany meet in Piero della Francesca, and his two principal pupils, Luca Signorelli and Melozzo da Forlì, announce, one, the approach of Michael Angelo; the other, that of Raphael.

The Umbrian current, which will touch Raphael, is accelerated with Melozzo, born like himself in that other trans-Appenine Umbria from which Gentile also came and which the Bolognese Francia was to connect with Venice. Florentine intellectualism is too difficult of approach for simple souls, and the mystic reaction to which it gave birth is too severe to enable them to find in it the easy piety that satisfies them and that cannot frighten the court of Rome, which has no love for mystics. With Melozzo da Forlì, one seems to hear the passing of the slightest breeze, the fingers of great blond angels touch their celestial harps and draw from them an undefined and distant music which is not to be confused with the storm of the trumpets of the Last Judgment. With Perugino, pious Umbria will be merely bigoted Umbria. The strong capital is misunderstood by its painters, and the square palaces, the hillside streets, and the whole heap of cubes and towers inspire Bonfigli alone with those stone landscapes in



which repose his doubtful Virgins and his too elegant angels. He who translates its needs is a man who believes in nothing, who drinks and curses and takes up religious work in order to get rich.<sup>1</sup> Such is the revenge of art when bigots attempt to take possession of it.

Perugino was the first to manufacture pictures of a merely ecclesiastical utility. It was not that he was without grace, a mannered grace which gives a somewhat irritating quality to his pretty Umbrian faces—blond, full, pink, and fresh, where the smile of Leonardo, now become insipid and a trifle silly, gives a curl to the flowerlike lips. Into the art of painting he introduced symmetry, which is the opposite of equilibrium, and he banished movement from space by the hardness of his sugared blues, greens, and reds, which he sets down raw and with scarcely more than a haphazard orchestration. His rounded vigor, his equivocal but robust elegance, his sharp precision in the drawing of backgrounds, slender trees, and the undulating lines of the valleys and the hills, the energy of his straight figures in which a monotonous rhythm gives a twist to the hips, places the foot on the earth, and gives to all the attitudes a strange appearance of dancing, all this explains sufficiently, nevertheless, the influence that he exercised on Raphael, who, after his departure from Urbino, spent his most impressionable years in Perugino's workshop. He felt the vigor of the rhythms—precise, very personal, very complete, and conceived almost like a motionless ballet—which Perugino stamped upon his forms in movement. It was extremely difficult for him to free himself from his master, and he died too soon ever to forget him entirely. At the end of his short and miraculous journey, he still retained,

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<sup>1</sup> Vasari.



BONFIGLI. Funeral of Sant' Ercolano.  
(*Pinacoteca Vanucci, Perugia.*)

from the painter of Perugia, the countenance of the Umbrian Virgin, which we shall scarcely find again, to tell the truth, save in his pictures of the saints—and which represent so small a part of the man! The countenance almost disappears from his last frescoes,



PINTURRICCHIO. The Return of Ulysses.  
(*National Gallery, London*).

remaining as only a faint memory in his portraits of women; they are pictures as pure, as solid, as opaque and dense as a blond marble.

When he left Umbria, he passed through Siena, where, for a time, he was given work by Bernardino Pinturicchio, who, like himself, had come from the workshop of Perugia and who was returning from Rome, where he had painted the apartments of the Borgias. At Siena

he met Sodoma, his elder by a few years, who was stifling in the holy city, haunted as he was by da Vinci, foreseeing Venice, and fashioned, besides, in the school of Luca Signorelli, whose robust frescoes of Monte Oliveto he had completed. He was a singular being, a poor fakir, who was believed to have practiced the most unmentionable vices, but whose art, nevertheless, reveals the ingenuousness of a young god fallen from the cool peaks of Olympus into a century fermenting with knowledge and with pleasure. He is a kind of reversed Masaccio, not having preserved, like the Florentine hero, his original purity in his terrible thirst for knowledge; indeed, he is quite the contrary of Masaccio, as he bitterly seeks to recover his original purity through the satisfaction of that very thirst. And yet he resembles Masaccio in being destined to open a new path upon which he himself will hardly more than set foot. Quite often one can see both Michael Angelo and Raphael in him. At such times he possesses a strength and a grace which are both heroic, and the touch of corruption and of enervation which he mingles with them serves only to render more touching his nostalgic passion and the magnificence of the lyricism through which we feel his anguish. It is in this way that the most profound Platonists of Florence might have painted at the most sensual moment of the Venetian maturity. The "Wedding of Alexander and Roxana" is, in this sense, a work that is unique in the world, through the sublime accent of its masculine and disenchanting poetry which makes clear to us, under the transparence of the veils and in the soft penumbra, the irresistible and fatal voluptuousness. The nude figures—male and female—have an indescribable character that partakes at once of Eden and of Greece and that Christianity

would have animated with an ecstasy of feverish, restless love. Sodoma is a strange spirit, full of youthful strength through which the mystic perfume of the old masters of his country mounts to the restless faces. The forms hesitate in their affirmation of his science, and their athletic power grows noble in a melancholy ardor which cannot quite reveal itself. He is intoxicated with the caress of hard bosoms, slim waists, and the knees of women, in which he sees a special beauty; his wayward spirit feels the needs of men and he hesitates. All his life he hesitates. Later on, at Rome, Raphael refused to efface his decorations. He had well observed Sodoma's haughty grace, and the carriage of a conqueror enslaved by an incurable adolescence. . . . He remembered it forever; perhaps he took from it the strongest elements of that magnificent handwriting by means of which he was to express all his pride of youth and his gratitude to nature for having made him what he was.

Even the sharp and charming Pinturricchio could not retard the impulsiveness with which he cast himself upon antique form, that hymn to the nude body which was rising everywhere, breaking the yoke of Florence, bursting forth at this very hour in Venice in the mature work of Giovanni Bellini, swelling still more in the nascent work of Giorgione and of Titian, and which was to take on, with the voice of Michael Angelo, the tragic power of a new creation. He was very far, to be sure, from Pinturricchio, the meticulous technician whose bad taste, perverse and free, led to the spreading out of so much metal and so many transparent stones on the frescoes which he worked in relief. Nevertheless, in his rapid excursion through the bizarre exoticism of that singular artist, he noted the cold, delicate landscapes engraved as if on a pane of glass by means of a



PINTURRICCHIO. Saint Elizabeth, detail, fresco.  
(*Borgia apartments, Vatican.*)

diamond, and the slender grace of the silhouettes that cleft the motley crowds with gestures like those of dancers. Pinturricchio developed in central Italy that spirit of the mirage and of far-away adventure, that fairy fancy which Gentile de Fabriano had diffused in the peninsula, with which Gozzoli had amused austere Florence, and which Carpaccio, among the Venetians, was at that moment carrying to its most astounding limits of fantasy and lyricism. The oceans opened up in the distance, the stars rained upon the earth, the poetry of imagined worlds charmed those precocious children who knew too much and who profited by the new sensations flowing in upon them from every side to renew in them their somewhat wearied inventiveness. It was from Pinturricchio, perhaps, and from the spirit of central Italy, brought to him by Perugino, that Raphael learned the enchantment of penetrating beyond the immediate vision and the subject imposed; he learned something of it even from Francia, whose vigorous but discordant and dry painting must soon have wearied him. After that he had only to seek in Florence, in the work of da Vinci and of Fra Bartolommeo, and especially in that of Masaccio, the sense of modeling and the need for architecture in a canvas; later on, he had only to watch his friend Sebastiano del Piombo painting in Rome and revealing the nascent desire of Venice, to sweep into a symphony, becoming more complex as he grew older, all the confused voices in which, for a century, the enthusiasm, the pain, the fever, and the will of Italy had been mounting.

## II

He summarized, as Giotto did, an imperishable moment. It is he who was that equilibrium for which

Italy had been seeking with so much anguish, and which the passionate clash of sensibility and intelligence prevented the crowd from realizing. One cannot help placing these two minds alongside of each other. Undoubtedly, Raphael is, with Giotto, the only one in



PERUGINO. The Combat of Love and Chastity (*Louvre.*)

the history of painting who invades all our faculties of reason and feeling with that profound gentleness. To tell the truth, it is his science that dominates; he has not the direct force that gives to the decorator of Padua and of Assisi a more virile tone, a more joyous candor, a more peaceful faith in that which he recounts upon the walls. But one does not know, when one looks at the sibyls or the frescoes of the Vatican, whether it is heroes or saints that one has before one's eyes, martyrs or philosophers, Virgins or Venuses, Jewish gods or



pagan gods; one feels that the forms harmonize with and penetrate one another, that colors call and answer one another; an undulation of harmonies that seems to have no beginning and no ending runs through one without meeting the least resistance and leaves one only the strength to hearken to the prolongation in oneself of the echo aroused by their memory.

What does he mean, and where has he seen such a union of everything that is matter and everything that is thought, everything that is feminine tenderness and everything that is male strength, everything that is the certitude of the races which have felt much and that is the wavering faith of the centuries which desire knowledge? He studied, inattentively perhaps, what had been done before him and what was being done around him; he seemed scarcely to look at the infinitely profound and multiple world of movements, colors, and forms; he gave ear to the sounds about him and breathed in the perfume of flowers and of women with that indifferent fervor that belongs only to a being who sees harmony springing from his very footsteps and love approaching him without his having summoned it; all of this he united in himself as in a sonorous center, without too closely investigating its source; and the whole of it, after having melted unresistingly at the hearth of his sentiment, came forth from him in waves as full, as calm, and as difficult to resist as the mysterious rhythm that governs the beating of hearts; that causes the seasons to be born, to die, and to be reborn; that causes the sun to burst forth and sink each morning and each evening. Long after the death of Raphael, Michael Angelo, even though he had not loved him, was perhaps thinking of the younger man more than of himself when he said: "Beautiful painting is religious



SIGNORELLI. The Promulgation of the Law. (*Sistine Chapel.*)

in itself, for the soul is lifted up by the effort that it has to make to attain perfection and to mingle with God: beautiful painting is an effect of that divine perfection, a shadow from the brush of God; it is a music, a melody. Very lofty intelligences alone can grasp it."

Raphael is one of the most calumniated men in history, and calumniated by those who have been loudest in their praise. The inexhaustible youth that shines from him has been ascribed to the fact that he died young, but it is accentuated in one work after another; and if he had lived to be very old it would not have ceased to renew itself, because it had existed before him and was to survive him, even as the spring-times and the autumns, which continue to produce despite the winters heaped up upon them. The ease with which he seizes upon a thousand objects, a thousand scattered facts of life, of nature, of history, of art, which he did not in himself produce, for the purpose of organizing them into harmonious images where nothing of the objects and of the original facts subsists save the lofty emotion which they called forth—all has given rise to the charge of an almost shocking propensity to assimilate and to imitate his work. And because one must follow his work step by step and make an effort oneself in order to appreciate the meaning of the effort which he had to expend in order to raise Perugian "piety pictures" to the level of the generalizations of the Vatican and the Farnesine, people have wondered, in a dull way, at his skill. Copious tears have been shed over the hundred Virgins, that are often so sugary—and for the most part unauthentic—that issued from his studio, so that one almost forgets the twenty portraits which make him, with Titian, the greatest Italian painter of character and which cause

us to feel, rising from the senses to the mind of this all-powerful youth, a force of construction in depth which would have made him an Italian Rembrandt had he lived thirty years longer.

There was in this painter, molded in his very flesh which yet never ceased its adoration, a little of the bronze of the armor which the fighters of that time left off to don the habits of the court. He sculptured the long bony hands with the golden bands of their rings and the pure dense planes of the faces with the polished skeleton covered by their muscles.



LUCA SIGNORELLI. Drawing. (*Louvre.*)

"Julius II," "Bindo Altoviti," "Inghirami," "Leo X," and "Maddalena Doni" are of those absolute forms which dwell wholly in the memory, as if, throughout their entire surface, they reach the inner walls of the skull. Their mind is made of the same metal as themselves; it escapes neither through the eyes nor through the gest-

ures, but is enclosed within the block they make, calm in the depth of the dull magnificence which the movement of the reds gives to the bare background, to the arm chairs, to the carpets, to the robes, to the air itself, and



SCHOOL OF SIGNORELLI. The Death of Moses, detail, fresco.  
(*Sistine Chapel.*)

to the reflections on the clean-shaven faces. The blacks are so pure that they seem to light up the red shadow. He has tones that are opaque, blacks and reds, and these stand almost alone, abandoned to themselves, like a mineral which has become quite solidified at the bottom of a stone crucible. And yet these tones penetrate one another; they have their profound harmonies, and are full and compact like the forms which they create. There is no power in art that surpasses the power of these portraits, red cardinals on white mules harnessed

with red, great bodies dressed in green or in black which kneel gravely, figures of authority or of violence, figures of youth also, of pride, of enthusiasm, isolated in their strength or bursting forth here and there in the vast compositions like wide-opened flowers on the surface of water that ebbs and flows.

This endless ebb and flow, which Giotto had understood, and which proceeds from the pediments of the temples of Greece and Sicily to the paintings of Raphael by way of the combinations of lines of the Arab decorators, is the whole Mediterranean ideal. Italy had been seeking it ever since Masaccio, because it was he who wrote into the surface of his frescoes the intelligence of the world, that sense of continuity which the succession of planes imposes on our instinct, but which does not suffice to reveal its nature to our mind, eager for clearly stated reasons and for exact demonstration. It is the arabesque, the rational expression of the living form, that the straight line, which is death, could not translate and from which the too metaphysical absolute of the circular line would exclude all possibility of renewal and of movement; only curved lines, undulating and continuous, can describe the living form in its flux and reflux, its flights and its downfalls, its repose and its effort, still leaving to each of the elements that it unites in a common life its personality and its function. It was through the arabesque that Raphael defined and realized the intellectual and sensual ideal which the Renaissance demanded, when the means for the social ideal which the Middle Ages had embodied in their life was exhausted. With Raphael, the passage from form to form is as subtle as it is from color to color, in the case of the Venetians or even Velasquez. Consider, in the "Heliodorus," the huddled group of terrified



SODOMA. Adam and Eve, detail.  
(*Accademia di Belle Arti, Siena.*)

mothers, their children in their arms. Consider, in the "Parnassus," the concatenation of the musical rhythm, the intertwining groups of the women, the union, as if in a marriage, their graces which blend, their gentle heads inclined toward each other as they look over the rounded shoulders from which their bare arms flow with a single movement. Consider, above all, the fresco of the "Sibyls" or that of the "Jurisprudence," where the forms are so well adapted to the surfaces to be decorated that they seem to give birth to those surfaces through their volumes and their directions. Consider how one gesture explains another and compels a reply; how tresses, heads, arms, and shoulders affirm, in the effortless combination of the curves of their attitudes, that there is in nature not a single inert or living form that is not bound up with all the others; consider how the mind is led without a halt from one end of life to the other. With Raphael, the line of the Florentines, which was born and kept alive with so much difficulty, frees itself, and defines on the surface and realizes in depth the succession of the planes and the continuity of the modeling; and, in a harmony where the grays and the reds, the greens, the blacks, the lilacs, and the silver-whites yield themselves to the humble substance of the walls which fixes them forever, the unity of expression of line, mass, and color is affirmed for the first time.

It is in this that we seek the reason for the power which Raphael has exercised over all the painters of modern Europe, even when they had seen him only through copies or engravings, even when they did not love him. Upon the mind of men, for whom the world of forms is the revealer of the world of ideas, he imprints a mark sinuous and precise whose significance



one must know if one is to follow it without peril. If he had brought into painting no more than an attempt to return to the ideal of the antique, as in the pagan figures of the Farnesine, where the beautiful nude divinities, framed by heavy garlands of foliage, of fruits, and pot-herbs, recall the abundant strength of the decorators of Pompeii, which in turn offer such a wealth of other lessons besides, he would not be Raphael. He would be, with Michael Angelo and before Sodoma, only the most brilliant initiator of that plastic rhetoric which misled Italy and from which all of Europe was to suffer. But his glory was to affirm that individualism could not live in the desert, that, for the greater harmony of the spirit, it must find some way of demonstrating the need that men have to define the relationship among the universal forms when the conditions of their existence have not permitted them to find that relationship in the social bond itself. The arabesque is the translation into plastics of the highest individualism.

The crowds of the north have no need of it; the Gothic men scarcely suspected its existence. To understand this one must have tasted of the spectacle of the worshipers in a cathedral of the north and in an Italian basilica. The northern crowd is united by a single sentiment; whether it is sincere or factitious is of no importance. It stands up, sits down, and kneels at the same moments and with the same gestures, the men on one side, the women on the other. All the heads are on the same level, all the faces look toward the same point. The bond is invisible, but present. Feeling is what makes these people respond all at once to the sentimental appeal which comes from the priest, from the singing, or from the organ. In Italy, the men and the



SODOMA. The Marriage of Alexandra and Roxana, detail.  
(*Farnesine.*)

women mingle. Some remain standing, others are seated, some look at the altar, others turn their backs to it, groups form and melt away again, people walk about the church, and conversations arise or are interrupted.



RAPHAEL. *The Marriage of the Virgin*, detail.  
(*Brera, Milan.*)

Each one is there for himself, each one is hearkening only to the passion that brought him here, the mystic exaltation, the sorrow, the hatred, the love, the curiosity, or the admiration, and it is that alone which determines his gesture, makes him sit down or arise, walk about or remain motionless, which carries him to his knees, with a child erect in his arms, or makes him prostrate himself upon the pavement, against which he strikes his forehead. There is no people in Europe less Christian than this one, which is why the Church had to be organized here in order to maintain an

appearance of solidarity, as opposed to the individual. Italian Catholicism is a social arabesque.

That is the reason, also, why the plastic arabesque was born of the meditation of the painters of this country.

Since our nature requires a harmony so powerful that in order to satisfy it we are willing to pass through sorrow, and since we did not find the desired harmony in the sentiment of the multitudes, it was indeed necessary for us to unite the separate beings—erect, kneeling, or laid low by the wind of warring passions—in a single line, sinuous, firm, and uninterrupted, a



RAPHAEL. Tommaso Inghirami.  
(*Pitti Palace.*)

line that should not permit a single one among them to escape from the living harmony which was divined by the senses of the artists and which was created by their will.

Moreover, when one surveys Italy, as one comes out from the Tuscan hills, from the Roman circus, from the Lombard plains, and as one goes from one height to another, one sees that the whole country undulates

like the sea. Whether seen from above and from afar, when one forgets the convulsions of the earth and the tempests of passion in the souls of men, everything in Italy shows the necessity for her returning to herself: the outlines of the mountains, the ramparts of the high hills which lead the cities built upon them down to the plains by the winding roads; the cities themselves tell the same tale with their steeply sloping streets that separate like a river, pass under the cradle of the old vaults, and seem to caress the walls with the ebbing of their bare pavements; and we see this character of Italy again in its language, a golden liquid flowing over iron sands, and we see it in the history of the country, in the even light, that emanates from it although it has passed, almost without transition, during thirty centuries, from the proudest summits to the most barren depths. . . . And there is something of all of this in the genius of Raphael Sanzio of Urbino.

And yet something is lacking. The decorative compositions do not always respond to the central principle of art, which is to bear witness to life regardless of the pretext for it and of the fate which is reserved for it; Raphael does not seem to suffer from having all his acts prescribed for him and from depending on the caprice of an old man who may die any day. And whatever the liberty given him to express himself as he thinks best, one sees a little too clearly that he is not his own master, and that he is not galled by the fact. It is the art of a man who is too happy. We feel a certain lack of emotion in ourselves when we are before his frescoes. The work of those who have suffered is a stronger wine for us. His arabesque is often apart from himself and, despite the plenitude of the form, its direction is not always determined by the sentiment that animates it,



RAPHAEL. Parnassus, detail, fresco. (*Vatican.*)

and a decorative mask covers the human face. It is only just to say that he died at the age when the majority of superior men begin to catch a glimpse of the idea that the beauty of gesture always responds to the requirements of the intimate movements which it interprets. There are, in some of his last paintings, the "Sistine Madonna" and the "Heliodorus" especially, complete envelopments of arms and of breasts, and a drama of lives closely interwoven, which show an immense and continuous expansion of his heart. In the "Miraculous Draught of Fishes" and in the "Fire in the Borgo," the strength and the splendor of the gestures, which compel us to view the human beings as statues come to life, attest his discovery of the nobility of his mind—a nobility which the "Farnesine" attests, thanks to the fidelity of his pupils, with an august, virile, and majestic splendor. For a decisive realization, he would have needed ten or fifteen years more and a greater amount of will-power to resist his tendency to squander himself through his power of love. Doubtless, Michael Angelo would not have ceased to hate him, since, even in Raphael's last works, in which he renders homage to the power of his rival by yielding to his influence, Michael Angelo found a pretext for despising him. But the unfailing esteem, in which man through his moral ascendancy holds those who are strong, would probably have given him, in his jealousy, an opportunity to wring from Raphael even greater pride and unity, in order to complete his subjugation. As the static art of Raphael developed and borrowed from the universe an increasing number of elements, to be organized into increasingly complex compositions, Michael Angelo continued to project his dynamism farther and farther into the forms in movement, which the formid-

able weight of Italian thought was precipitating into his spirit from the depths of four centuries.

## III

If his life was simply one long drama, it was because he separated himself from men too much to commune with them, and because he had too high an opinion of mankind to accept their inferiority and admit their baseness. But we compel other men to forget their ills when we force our own into silence and open the gates of the world to those intellectual harmonies which alone go beyond sorrow. "Italian painting," he said, "will never cause a tear to be shed." He led those who know how to suffer to the threshold of heroic happiness.



RAPHAEL. A Child, detail of a fresco.  
(*Accademia di San Luca, Rome.*)

He came from Florence. Born amid its last storms, he had in him the fire of the passion through which she had lived. He had appeared there twenty years after da Vinci, at the moment when Florence was reaching the most feverish point in her history. He had read Plato. He was never without his Dante. A pupil of Ghir-



landajo, the most direct of the painters of the period, he sought the intimacy of the works of Giotto, of Masaccio, of della Quercia, of Donatello, and Piero della Francesca. He knew Savonarola and followed him. At twenty-six years of age, he had torn from the marble the gigantic David which summarizes the sorrowing youth and the tense energy of the city.

He was, or wanted to be, everything that she had been: a constructor, a painter, a sculptor, and a poet. In order to become acquainted with the human body, he shut himself up with cadavers until the odor drove him out of doors. If the whole of the dream and all the science of the spirited city were in accord in the work of da Vinci, they never ceased to struggle with each other in him. His great soul was like the summit of a wave which rose and fell with the surges of energy and with the crises resulting from the cowardice of the unhappy city of his birth. Out of despair he left it. When he returned, it was to try to save it. Perhaps, alone in fallen Italy, his heart bore the weight of her servitude: "It is sweet for me to sleep; it is sweeter for me to be of stone; as long as misfortune and shame endure. To see nothing, to feel nothing, therein lies my greatest happiness. Do not, I beg, awaken me! Speak low! . . ."

On his way from Florence to Rome, at Orvieto, he saw the newly painted frescoes of Luca Signorelli, who had already covered the walls of the Convent of Monte Oliveto with powerful decorations in which the discipline of Piero della Francesca revived the enervated soul of the old masters of Florence. Here he saw Herculean forms, twisted under their garments, strive to burst their bonds in their explosion of strength and fury. Or, again, the human body, stretched like a



RAPHAEL. Heliodorus Expelled from the Temple. (*Vatican.*)

bundle of cords, had become a thing of mechanical expression where the nerves, almost bare, hurled passion into the limbs, in short, repeated jets of flame. These frescoes were imprinted in the memory of the young man as if made by the gashes of a sword. They



RAPHAEL. The Conflagration of the Borgo, detail, fresco. (*Vatican.*)

were the first anatomical nudes. The Italian science of the human body was unveiled in them with uncompromising precision. Save a few archangels clad in iron who guard the gates of heaven, all the figures were nudes. There were skinned corpses, painted directly, reanimated, and cast back into the current of life with incredible violence. The foreshortening was vio-

lent; bones cracked, jaws contracted, tendons were hard as metal cables, men and women howled; there was a ferocious welter of bodies martyred by demons whose membranous wings stretch into sinister veils as in a heaven devoid of hope. A great work. Passion, knowledge, everything, indeed, moved toward a common goal. When his son dies, Signorelli, suppressing his sorrow, undresses him and paints him, without a tear. His great virile drawing strikes and strikes again

like a steel blade. Savanorola had just hurled his anathema at the times and been burned alive on the Piazza della Signoria. A breath of fear forces repentant Italy to bow down, and although Signorelli is more healthy than Botticelli, and little given to mysticism, he, as well as Botticelli, obeys the voice of the prophet casting into the Christian hell that which was thought of at that time as pagan form—as if a form could live otherwise than through its relationship with the whole of society, its atmosphere, its history; as if it ever returned to the earth in the same shape in which it had appeared before.

Alone with these great memories, Michael Angelo lived at Rome. There he saw six popes die, never yielding to their menaces nor obeying their orders, save to revenge himself for his slavery through the freedom of his art. He needed that frame in order to exalt his dream and to make it bear witness to the power within him, a power through which he could cope with the most overwhelming problems. His surroundings were sufficiently materialistic and demoralized for him to decide to wrap himself in silence and to develop in him that formidable sense of shame that inspired him to strip the gods naked in order to crush the conclave of cardinals under the weight of primitive heroism.

His entire life is a conflict between the passion that dragged him on toward the admirable appearances of material Nature and the will for purification which his pride imposed upon him. With such a love for what exists, for what moves, for what is defined by a volume in space, one must suffer through one's inability to be all-inclusive. And he who, in such a state of absolute sensual power, feels that the encounter between the soul and the flesh would calm that suffering, such a man



RAPHAEL. Portrait of Baldo, detail. (*Doria Gallery, Rome.*)

is accursed, but he may become a hero if he refuses to exhaust his desire and reserves his own power of exaltation to exalt the men who are to come and for the glory of his spirit. Resistance to love is not an ideal to all men—to propose it would be the ruin of the world—but for those who are haunted and pursued relentlessly by love, resistance to love, by causing the repressed forces of tenderness and desire to flow back upon themselves, may bring about inner government of their being and the sovereign domain over the forms of the universe.

What incomparable power is promised to him who gathers up the absolute science which those who came before him seem to have prepared for his use, who builds in such fashion that his work shall resist the daily assault of the temptations accumulated by two centuries of intense material and moral civilization, and who appears at the culminating point of the thought of a people, the weight of whose fall he converts into his own ascent! Italy, by searching her heart and by examining thoroughly into her soul and her body, by demanding of the dead humanities the secret of life, and the secret of death from living humanity, had forged the language of her passion in blood and in fever. What was she now to say with it? Was there then no direction to give to the life of our feelings? Must we, like Raphael, unite all its currents into an indifferent harmony wherein we would be able to find repose only at the moment when we yielded ourselves to it? Beyond the natural rhythm which a great spirit, free from disquietude, could find in a world in which the hour was sounding for it to satisfy the desire which had dictated its effort, were there no other rhythms which could console the despair of men when they came to feel that



RAPHAEL. Venus and Cupid, fresco. (*Farnesine.*)

the equilibrium attained for a moment was escaping them? After Mozart, Beethoven. The greatness of Michael Angelo is that he understood and said that positive happiness is not accessible to us, that humanity seeks repose so that it may escape further suffering and, in order that it may not die, plunges back into suffering as soon as it has found repose. The martyrdom of Florence, torn unwittingly between its need for defining form and its wild spirituality, is born of its own uncertainty. Michael Angelo, in whom this martyrdom is prolonged, seizes upon certitude, but expresses the very pain which one endures in seizing it. The central composition of the ceiling of the Sistine is the center of his thought. The serpent whose coils twine around the solitary tree is at the same time the temptation which bends over man and woman, and the angel that drives them forth from Paradise. There is no possibility of choice. If we will not taste of knowledge, we shall not taste of pleasure. As soon as we have knowledge we begin to suffer. Michael Angelo reveals to men that they can hope for nothing beyond an equilibrium which does not satisfy them and, embittered at the idea of his impotence, he disdainfully presents the equilibrium to them.

Sometimes—and the greater part of his sculptures avow it—he succumbs. And then he is seized with wrath. It is in vain that he passes his days and even his nights, the lamp at his forehead, locked up in his studio with the marble which he attacks from all sides—he, small and frail—and though he makes it quiver with every chip that flies, the material dominates him. Donatello and above all della Quercia were sculptors more than he was. There are some heroic pieces: the somber “Night,” and the pregnant “Dawn,” with her





MICHAEL ANGELO. Decorative Figure, fresco.  
(*Sistine Chapel*.)

arms and her legs as full in form as the boughs of a tree, and her countenance where despair rises with her awakening; there is his "Torso," with its knotted limbs, its cracking knees, its twist, its terrible folds. Not an ensemble survives. The slave may twist his chains, the knees of the Virgin may support the weight of a



MICHAEL ANGELO. Night. (*Medici Tomb, Florence.*)

god, the child may turn to bite at the mother's breast, and the dusk and sleep may pour darkness upon the brows and blot out the eyes: the drama lies elsewhere. Our emotion is like a revolt, a disquietude with which we are vexed when we know that we have been touched by it. It comes from his exhausting struggle against a rebellious material whose violent caprices he cannot control.

The error of the last schools of Greece had not, however, escaped him. He was repelled by the play of light and shade on carved stone. He knew that the

expression of volume in space was the extreme limit of plastic effort, line being really no more than a conventional sign, and color having only an uncertain and variable existence, determined by the hour, the season, the lighting, and the most fleeting shades of our sensi-



MICHAEL ANGELO. Dawn. (*Medici Tomb, Florence.*)

bility. He rejected polychromy itself and demanded that the marble be as naked as the idea. He has said all of this in terms so clear that one gets into the way of seeing in them only the danger which they conceal, the danger into which the doctrinaires of the following century will fall and in whose toils David will be caught. "Painting is beautiful in the measure that it approaches sculpture; sculpture is bad the more it approaches painting."

How was it that he did not perceive that he himself was much nearer sculpture when he covered the walls with frescoes than when he attacked the material of the wall? Each time that he takes up the chisel, he is the victim of his practically absolute science of muscular anatomy. The tempest that thunders within his forms is dispersed at the barrier of their muscles. It does not radiate in infinite waves like the spirit which issues from Egyptian statues, in balanced waves like the spirit that issues from the marbles of Olympia, or in penetrating waves like the spirit that issues from the old French sculptures. He composed movement into its material elements. He knew too well how the muscles were made. It was in vain that he kneaded and twisted them in all directions; he permits himself, only on the rarest occasions, to gather them all into synthetic masses which render his thought with a vigor proportionate to the degree in which they define the architecture of the bodies of which they form a part. If, in general, he had a wrong idea of the great expressive surfaces, it was because he knew the mechanism of expression too well.

But painting liberates him. At first, he does not want to paint the Sistine. Then, through weakness, he yields, learns all by himself an art which he did not know before, and remains shut in for four years in the chapel, alone with God. His brushes obey the fury of a mind for which marble, a material too hard to work, had ever been sluggish in its response. When he had produced half of a colossus, he had already passed beyond it—other torments, other victories, and other defeats demanded their turn. It was almost never that he finished his statues, and never his monumental ensembles. He will finish the Sistine, the most spacious

decorative ensemble in the world. He is a great painter in spite of himself, and in spite of himself it is in painting that he is himself.

In this art, his science serves him. He can cause to stand out from the wall the volumes that he wants, he can send others back into it; he can dazzle us by the audacity and the violence of his foreshortenings, and pour forth darkness and light at will. He can subject his tempestuous dream to the yoke of his terrible will. When the scaffoldings fall, there are a hundred living colossuses on the immense vault, in groups or solitary, a hundred Herculean bodies that cause the temple to tremble and seem to create the tempest that rolls in the structure; their clamor merges with the flight of the clouds and the maelstroms of the suns.

If one has not been there, if one has not seen that work, one cannot imagine it. One must hear it. I have spoken; one hears it. It is the drama of Genesis, but more exalted. The symbolism of the formidable biblical mind multiplies its force upon contact with reason. One sees nothing but man confronted with his destiny. One knows surrounding life no more. One is at the edge of the primitive abyss. The burned-out blues, the silver grays, and the dull reds combine into something like a pale, powdered gold like that which trails in the wake of comets and with which the Milky Way fills the spaces of the heavens. God wanders in his solitude. The stars are born. The lightning passes from the finger of God to the finger of man. Our ancestress, young and naked, comes forth from sleep, showing her breasts and her flanks which shall not be exhausted. The first sorrow comes forth from the first hope. The deluge crushes life and draws the figures



MICHAEL ANGELO. The Libyan Sibyl, fresco, detail  
(*Sistine Chapel.*)

into an embrace in order to rend asunder more readily the limbs that knot themselves with other limbs like vines. Powerful maternities are divined in the shadows, the prophets thunder, the Sibyls open and close the book of fate. At the bottom of the decoration in the last days, primitive bestiality piles up bodies like bunches of grapes in fortuitous embrace, the temple crumbles, the Cross itself is uprooted by the storm. The wind which arose in the beginning blows until the end. The figures of beauty, of fecundity, and of youth are whirled in it like leaves.

Doubtless, he is the only one who has dared to seize upon painting in order to express the moral tragedy, and has remained unconquered. When one possesses form to such a degree, when it pours out of one with the leaps of the muscles, the tortures of the flesh, and the horror of meditation upon forgetfulness and death, one has the right to use it like a weapon and to command it to obey the mind. It was as if a man, who had been swept away by a river, had had the power to turn suddenly to stop it with his two hands and breast, and to force it back into its course. On the eve of her long sleep, Italy found once more the iron words of Dante. Greece had discovered her soul in form, Israel had attempted to impose her soul upon form without dreaming of the living grandeur that words, which are form also, gave to her. There came a man who had at once the senses of an artist and the heart of a prophet, and who caused his poem to leap forth from the shock of passion and of knowledge. All the forces which the philosophers oppose to one another he possessed in the highest degree of exaltation, each one demanding its rights uncompromisingly; but his will dominated them all and harmonized them. Sick and suffering, he lived

eighty-eight years and saw his race decline—he, who was his race attaining its maturity. The soul of a giant dwelt in his weak body, and it was to small-skulled athletes that he confided the mission of expressing



MICHAEL ANGELO. Study. (*Musée de Chantilly.*)

thought which, in its harmony, rises as high as that of Æschylus. His prophetic fury did not prevent an invincible grace from manifesting itself at every moment. He doubted everything and himself, he was afraid of everything and of himself, yet when he took up his tools he asserted himself with the most brilliant courage. He loved only one woman and she would not return his



love. He lived alone because he knew that there were in him such wells of tenderness that a terrible modesty prevented him from opening them. Chaste and scorning the flesh, he embraced all flesh in the sensuality of his intelligence. His virginity made fruitful the dead womb of Italy.

Never was there a man less mystic nor more religious than that one. He knew too much to surrender himself to the troubled intoxication of the mystics, he was too well aware of his ignorance not to be religious. His work is the epic of the intellectual Passion. Whatever the tortures that await him, his intelligence will overtake the feeling that runs ahead of it and will compel it, despite its revolt, to surrender itself. Reason attains its summit, but it is coupled with a lyricism too intense to permit it to devour itself. From that time on, freed from all the ancient dogmas, standing above Christianity which is almost dead and paganism which cannot be revived and Judaism which willed to know nothing save the spirit, Michael Angelo is face to face with the divine idea; he grapples with the eternal symbolism. When he touches the supreme symbol, when he feels himself upon the brink of the final abstraction, when he approaches God, he is seized with terror at the idea of his solitude, he makes a desperate effort, and, realizing in a flash the highest equilibrium, he violently forces form into the void of which he has just caught a glimpse.

#### IV

Works of this stature are made for the distant future. Their shadow is fatal; it stifles everything that grows around them. Italy no longer had the strength and the faith which would have been necessary to endure the



MICHAEL ANGELO. Creation of Man, detail. (*Sistine Chapel.*)

truths that were offered her by the last of the Italians. Had she comprehended the meaning of the symbol of the Sistine and consented still to suffer in order to understand, she would have succumbed none the less. She had expended too much passion in the struggle, and, in consequence, was annihilated. Never had any world, in coming to its maturity, known the despair which inheres in the force of Michael Angelo, nor the kind of surrender to lassitude which one often feels arising in that of Raphael. For four centuries, one, the same as the other, was to create innumerable victims, all those who could not extract from the vigor of a growing people a sentiment sufficiently virile to resist their formal instructions. When we know too many things, we can no longer discover anything. The School, indeed, begins to be organized during the lifetime of Michael Angelo, with his pupils and those of Raphael: Giulio Romano, Giovanni da Udine, and Daniele da Volterra. The Accademia di San Luca is founded less than fifty years after his death. Italy was to teach those unable to understand that in order to create masterpieces it was necessary to include families of wrestlers in the "composition" of a canvas.

It was Italy, to be sure, who revealed "composition" to the world and who, first through Giotto, then through the masters of Rome and Venice, used it with the greatest ease, power, and authority. Without her we should have had neither Rubens nor Rembrandt nor Poussin, who are great composers. "Composition" is the introduction of intellectual order into the chaos of sensations. Composition is necessary. But composition is personal. It belongs only to that artist who is capable, through his own power, of discovering in nature a few essential directions which reveal to him the law of



MICHAEL ANGELO. *The Deluge*, fresco, detail. (*Sistine Chapel*.)

her general movement. If composition does not express a living unity of forms, of colors, and of sentiments, it is a worn-out garment that covers nothing. A fruit, a glass, any bit of life, or anything, two tones set beside each other harmoniously, take on an eternal value in contrast with the "well-composed" large picture which expresses no intimacy between him who conceived it and the still inexhaustible world of sensations and of ideas.

The School does not kill life, for it appears only during the death struggle of the races. But it acts as a brake on the effort of those who go toward life; it crushes their last struggles or compromises the first revolts that occur at the dawn of new societies. It sows ruin round about it by counseling men to forget the heroic hours when they lived in innocence. Outside of its incessant attacks on sensibility—which I should call negligible if, in the blotting out of a single sensibility amid such isolation, its loss would not react upon all the others—outside the question of the men whom the School has led astray, its greatest crime is, that for three centuries it intervened between our love and the influence of the primitives and permitted the vandalism of academic æsthetes to trample upon so many flowers. The primitives were not acquainted with anatomy and did not know how to compose. Their form was empty of muscles, but it was full of life. An irresistible sentiment impressed its rhythm upon their ensembles, a profound sentiment which leaves our emotion free spontaneously to establish the missing connections through an automatic operation of the senses. Later on, through reaction, it was only the primitives who were loved, and in the name of the primitives men condemned, not the School, but those from whom the School sprang.



MICHAEL ANGELO. Judith and Holofernes, detail of fresco.  
(*Sistine Chapel.*)

And that is not the least of its offenses. When the power of primitive feeling, which is almost always obscure and scattered among many men, is concentrated in a single one and is illumined by contact with a supreme intelligence, the great mystery is fulfilled. We reach one of the summits of those waves of harmony which are traced in the memory of generations by the energy of living races.

Venice, although she had felt, through Tintoretto, the influence of Michael Angelo, possessed so much personal force that for more than half a century she still resisted the current. But outside of her, all Italy, which had culminated in Rome, had to submit to the power of Rome. Baccio Bandinelli, Benvenuto, Vasari, and Giovanni da Bologna introduced to Florence Michael Angelo—him in whom she recognized too much of herself not to abandon herself to him. Her natural violence was less reconcilable with Raphael, from whom the local Roman School derived,—Bologna soon following Michael Angelo also. As to da Vinci, who had left but a few rare works there, she had no memory of him. The influence of that strange man had spread more especially in northern Italy, where it combined for a time with that of the Roman masters, through whom much of it was very quickly destroyed. The Milanese School, which it revived, remained almost a local manifestation and practically died with the delicate frescoes of Bernardino Luini, who treated the form, inherited from his master, with more abandon, and transported it into the blond and gentle atmosphere of Borgognone and the Lombard painters. If Ghirlandajo had known how to attain a sense of depth in the construction of his form, it is with that accent that he would have spoken of the familiar and intimate life of

the Italians. And if da Vinci had been attracted by that life, he would have told its story no more vividly than did Luini. This painter summarizes and expresses, with the greatest amount of force and nobility, an aspect of the Italian soul, and the most unexpected one. It is an Italy without affectation, apparently knowing no anguish, a solid country engrossed in its work like a land of the north. But it is peopled with young gods who would do the work of men. No one has loved Italian adolescence with greater pride—its easy and charming gestures, the vast crowds on whose faces the same smile wanders, as if the spirit of da Vinci were still lighting up the mouths that have grown more sensual and the eyes that have softened. In ashen landscapes, beside brooks and springs, plump young girls come to sit, with hesitating neck and shoulders, their massive arms and legs nevertheless elegant, round, tepid, and made as if they were composed of packed snow. It is strangely real: the women take off their stockings and fill their baskets, the men work the soil, both are simply Lombard peasants; but the noble spirit of the idyll, a singular heroism, and a proud and lively delicacy intervene to ennoble the whole art. There is nothing gentler or more mysterious. An undulating grace, a subtle charm, something indefinite, almost immaterial, floats through the work; it is like strong writing which we yet find difficult to grasp; the exquisite soul of the artist seems to hover around it, his voice discreetly insinuating, the charmingly pouting faces of his people hesitating between irony and tenderness, and never quite coming to a decision. Rome could not touch this man who rarely left his province and who, born the same year as Michael Angelo, died a third of a century before him.



Moreover, research work in formal architecture was more attractive to those solid Italians of the north—soldiers and husbandmen—than the dramatic dynamism that was the constant demand of the Romans.

Da Vinci, with his insistence on construction, meant more to them. The static art of Luini has admirable



MICHAEL ANGELO. Court of the Farnese Palace, Rome.

power, and the bold ceilings which Correggio painted in the library and in the cathedral of Parma are perhaps of more importance for their structural science, that recurs in all his other pictures, than for their inner movement. The spirit of da Vinci had impressed him all the more forcefully that he found in it an encouragement to accentuate the ambiguous character of a work through which the art program of the Jesuits was to define itself, that program foretold fifty years earlier

by the last painters of Umbria who so speedily completed the perversion of Italian genius. A voluptuous painter, hovering about the beautiful, moist forms within the groves drenched by blue mists where mythological heroes stretch out in their indolence, he yields to the influence of Michael Angelo only in so far as it leads him to envelop form in the insinuating caress of a Venetian atmosphere thicker and more unctuous than that which Titian had seen. With his masses of white foam, his swan down, and his spongy but yet firm flesh, over which he would draw a veil, as though he were ashamed of his desire and repented of having loved the flesh so well; and so the ambiguous quality in his work is accentuated and something unhealthy floats about his figures. He is perverse in his melancholy, in his desire for a chastity which he cannot attain—a great artist gone astray and lying to himself. His luscious modeling melts into a warm and transparent shadow, and it has so little frankness that its passages become subtle to the point of disappearance. With Caravaggio, who desires to react, and who does react at times with vigor against the invasion of affectation and insipidity, the shadows become, on the contrary, perfectly opaque, and objects start out from them in a violent relief which obtains the desired effect, but under which scarcely anything remains. Factitious suavity or simulated strength: imposture is everywhere. With the honeyed painting of Barroccio, the soul of Michael Angelo Buonarroti descends to the work of the confessional.

Bologna, the paradoxical city of the leaning towers, the city of megalomania and of monuments which, situated midway between Florence and Venice, seemed to stand condemned to disguise under its pretentious elo-



MICHAEL ANGELO. Night, detail. (*Medici Tomb, Florence.*)

quence, the genius of both places—Bologna tried to arrest the fall. It only hastened it by reducing painting to laboratory processes in which the formulas of Titian, of Michael Angelo, of Raphael, and of Correggio were cunningly combined. For a long time the learned city had aspired to this rôle: Francia had tried to soften the impoverished style of the painters of Ferrara, which Cosimo Tura, Ercole Roberti, and Francesco Cossa had forged under the double influence of the Umbrian and the Paduan masters, and which Lorenzo Costa had brought to Bologna—turning now in the direction of Venice, now in the direction of Umbria.

The spectacle that we now witness is the contrary of the one presented by the decadence of Greece, during which sources of life could be opened up here and there in new countries because the original organism, having developed more slowly and more universally, broke up with less rapidity; but in Italy there was no arresting the descent. The School, step by step, becomes a mere factory. Its principal founder at Bologna, Annibale Carracci, was still, if not a great painter, at least a man of noble will, of grave mind, and of conscience. He adapted intelligently the inventions of others, and ornamented the great melancholy palaces of the Italian princes who had now lost their independence. In his hollow but severely arranged pictures, the pagan divinities bend under his wealth of rhetoric. With Domenichino, the drama becomes completely external, the gestures break up and disperse the overstrained composition, and the mimicry turns into grimacing, though sometimes in a bare arm or in a bit of sky there vibrates the ethereal soul of Venice. The genuine grace of Albani is so sugary and sophisticated that one has difficulty in doing it justice. The bombast of Guido Reni

and of Guercino is well-nigh intolerable. What with false sentiment, icy and waxen color, the organization of the picture prescribed by recipe and conventional drawing, the discord that reigns in the art factory of fallen Italy becomes more and more accentuated and develops that gesticulating character which, in the seventeenth century, will culminate in the disjointed and indefatigable grandiloquence of Bernini.

With the contortions of his statues, with the battles and the romantic landscapes of Salvator Rosa, with the dregs of painting that we reach with the prestidigitation of Luca Giordano, the easy and questionable life of Naples invaded Italy and merged its troubled waters with the exhausted currents of the north. It contributed, at least, as much as was necessary to the Jesuit propaganda to mislead the tragic and passionate soul of Italy toward that baroque style in which passion turned to intrigue and tragedy to melodrama. We cannot deny that the style was lacking in abundance and in brilliancy. It had too much. Something of a Hindu exuberance puffed up the buildings and the pictures, and gave to the statues their convulsive appearance. But, within, there was none of the burning sap of India. Instead, there is a heavy look of vanity that inflates the forms with a desire to look well, to please, and to astonish. Under the dominion of bigoted and corrupt political organizations, the great Italian cities, from the sixteenth century onward, pay homage to their own wealth in extravagant churches, amiable and gilded, and in palaces ornamented, like the churches, with profuse decoration. Excepting Venice, where the atmosphere saves everything, this passion for building, for decorating, and for dazzling gave to certain of the cities, to Genoa, to Bologna, and especially to Rome,



BERNARDINO LUINI. The Gathering of the Manna, fresco.  
(Brera, Milan.)

a character of obstinate power which approaches a kind of beauty; Genoa, however, is insolent, and Bologna pretentious. Rome, with her ruins overgrown with verdure, her red palaces whose reflection turns the fountains to blood, her enormous volumes of water—Rome haunts our memory with a monotonous heaviness. Through twenty centuries she has remained what she was, the place where nature, more than anywhere



BERNARDINO LUINI. *The Bath of the Nymphs.* (*Brera, Milan.*)

else in the world, has consented, with unwearying indifference, to take on the form of the will. Besides, in the eighteenth century, she, like Venice, has a moment of semiawakening and lifts her stone shell to permit the entrance among her ruins of beautiful and princely villas surrounded by parks rich in sentiment. We cannot be sure as to the explanation of this, but it doubtless lies in the philosophic revolt that was taking place everywhere. Piranesi constructs his great staircases and dreams his terrible prisons; it is the last, deep sigh of Michael Angelo, a fantastic gleam in the shadow, the tragic spirit of Italy stifling under the crumbling walls and hidden behind the cellar bars, the violent and

mysterious bound of her great heart which cannot be stilled. Rome is strange. Ugly when one comes to analyze it, the city preserves in its ensemble an artificial splendor which is garbed in living splendor by the people and the gardens.

In Italy, in England, and in France, as in the Orient, the garden is the only artistic expression that belongs



THE VILLA D'ESTE.

to the aristocracies. It adapts itself to the most imperious needs of those beings who have been robbed of self-possession through idleness and wealth. It throws around them the solitude which they cannot seek within themselves. It is made to surround them with murmurs, with coolness and shade, the possession of which, amid the freedom of the earth, is the recompense of the poor. Even when it is amassed, shaped, and broken in, nature is never ugly. The trees remain the trees; the water remains the water; the flowers remain the flowers; and whatever artist arranges them, space and light retain the power of softening the contrasts, of organizing the values, and of orchestrating the colors.



The villas of the Roman princes have a tragic majesty. The terraces rise by stages toward the rectangular palaces; the somber vegetation which covers them fills the air with bitter perfumes and outlines the tall shadows in the basins of water almost black. The



CORREGGIO. Detail of the Vault of the  
Convent of St. Paul, fresco.

waters there are almost motionless under the cypresses that shoot upward; and the marble steps descend from circular balustrades that are green with moss. The silence of the lawns under the umbrella-shaped pines gives a funereal note to the prearranged order of the gardens. One thinks of death, of absolute forgetfulness.

And so the gardens of the villas surrounding Rome can provide the city with a mortuary crown of boxwood

and laurel. Her decline begins on the day when the duels between the great monarchies are staged. And the moral force which the Papacy lent to her, being no longer the expression of the crowd, survives only as an appearance. In reality, Rome's collapse began when Italy, crying out in her pain, gave birth to what was called the modern spirit, which extends even to the new intuitions which press upon us to-day. For da Vinci, the unknown never ceases to retreat before us, and we shall know nothing of the reality of things. For Michael Angelo, we shall continue to suffer until we have seized a moment of harmony, and when that moment has passed our pain will return. Raphael offers us the example of one of those fugitive and immortal victories. Italy, through these three minds, has freed humanity from dogma, has authorized all the audacities of investigation and thought, has reconciled in a possible unity all the currents of idealism, and has freed from its bonds the form which expresses it.



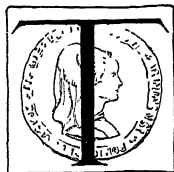
MICHAEL ANGELO.



A CANAL IN VENICE

### Chapter III. VENICE

#### I



THE foreign wars of the city are almost constant, but at a distance; there are no civil wars, a sheltered position affording protection against invasion by sea or land makes possible a continuous development; ten centuries of independence are acquired by fortunate struggle and by easy and living effort this, even more than the water and the sky, is what gives Venice her original character in the midst of an Italy who becomes herself only in moments of crisis, torn by revolutions and mutilated by conquests. Venice seems to be unaware of the fever and the anguish of her search; she gropes but little in order to find her path, travels along it steadily with the wind or against it, slackens her pace to gather up the magnificent fruits

that are offered her, enjoys their pulp, becomes intoxicated, and falls asleep to the sound of music, among the fading garlands, the dying flowers, and the lights which the daylight pales in the depths of the old ruined palaces. It is Greece reborn, nude once more, grown heavier, laden with golden grapes, and seen against a background of sleeping forests and stormy twilights. One would say that Venice prolonged the effort of antiquity only that she might affirm—despite her retreats, her necessary reactions, and the apparent contradictions of the world which surrounded her—the continuity of human effort, and to transmit to the modern mind, with the fruits which she holds out to it so ripe that they open by themselves, the seed of constantly recurring harvests.

She herself had found this seed amid the rotten pulp which was fermenting at the foot of the tree of Byzantium. For five centuries her sailors drained Hellenized Asia in order that the mounting life of young Italy might assimilate the ancient spirit of voluptuousness, of magnificence, and of death. The roots of Venice go deep into the red shadow of Saint Mark's, under the cupolas of burnt gold where the incense has an odor like that of rotting grain and blood.

This city of merchants mingled, in its lively activity, Italian passion with the corruption of the later empire, the tainted Christianity of the Orient with the barbaric Christianity of the Occident, the spirituality of Islam with the paganism of Greece; and from all this it made, with the sustained sweep of its indefatigable energy, something as personal as its own life hanging between air and water, something as victorious as the warfare which it carried on upon every sea to affirm and maintain its dominion. And so it arrived at its profound,



PALAZZO FOSCARI (14th Century). The façade, detail.

imperious, and unchallengeable harmony, accumulating without choice or taste, subject to the chance of defeat and caprice, all the scattered elements whose cohesion and agreement are, as a rule, necessary for the attainment of harmony. Before it had ripened in the soul of Titian, the harmony of Venice, imposing itself like a natural force, had arisen spontaneously in the current of an overwhelming force which unconsciously made use of the vapor of the water and the light to mingle sea and sky, thereby attenuating contrasts and sweeping unrelated colors into a single movement.

Only parvenus, who succeed in everything, who have the fire of audacity and the habit of victory, could pile up in this manner centuries and styles one upon another, decorate the gates of a church with nude women, set up a Roman quadriga above the golden cupolas which they brought back from Byzantium, perch diminutive lions upon columns too tall for them, and build palaces whose base is on top. Bad taste displayed with such insolence ends by creating a kind of elementary and fatal beauty, like a forest in which the roughest and most delicate forms are mingled, like a crowd in which the brutality of primitive instincts is blended with the refinement of the spirit and the purest impulses of the heart. Venice tempered her strength and her grace in a kind of tide of intoxicated and troubled matter, like a world in which, from the womb of tropical nature, there should arise alcazars and mosques, Hindu temples, parthenons, and cathedrals.

In this atmosphere of an Oriental tale, amid the sound of festivals, of the flapping of the flags, of the reviews of the ships with the purple sails, and of the tremendous hum of the docks where three thousand



PISANELLO. Drawing from the Valardi Album. (*Louvre.*)



ships poured the whole of the Orient into the motley crowd, there was born spontaneously an order full of the energy of Venice, at the moment when this wonderful hearth, absorbing the warmth of distant lands, sent it back to its sources across the sea, and spread it over the Occident. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Europe was torn by the anarchy of feudalism, by the effort of the communes to retain their life, and by the first attempt at monarchical unity. Venice alone, at the peak of its development, enjoyed absolute peace within itself; its people were happy under the iron rule of its commercial nobility which, save in political matters, allowed them complete liberty and gorged them with the wealth that its terrible policy of protectionism was accumulating within the city, at the risk of stifling it. Venice witnessed the fusion of the ideas which its traders and sailors brought to it amid the tumult in the wake of their ships. The Moslem world and the Christian world, the two hostile forces which for three centuries had been contending for the mastery of the Mediterranean, found in Venice the only territory where they could meet without fighting—a strange, fairylike, and spontaneous harmony in which Moorish form and Gothic form harmonized without effort. As in all other places, the rise of architecture preceded the rise of plastics and of literature. Everywhere else, it was coincident with the great moment of the collective energy of the people, who first construct the dwellings which, later on, will be supplied by the energy of liberated individuals.

But, as everywhere in Italy, the temple does not respond to the desire of the city. Here it is the palaces of the merchants which interpret that desire. Wealth did not destroy the expression of popular enthusiasm,



PISANELLO. Medals. (*Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*)

because wealth could not be maintained and increased except by indefatigably opposing to the brutality of the peoples a physical and moral force; because all the lower organisms of the isolated, unique city were perpetuated in its achievements; because wealth was coincident with the awakening and the burst of Italian passion. Since the death of the world of antiquity and after the time of the cathedral, our most powerful symphony of stone is there. It unrolls all along the Grand Canal or at the edge of the solitary *rios* where, in the evening, the lanterns pour into the waters of the night their narrow pools of blood; it is in the façades of red and gold and verdigris, whose frescoes are corroded with salt, and above which, over the moldy flight of steps, tiers of colonnettes sprang out of the open-work of the balconies, to join, at the peak of the ogival windows, with the trefoils and the embellishments of the flowers above. In these moments of tremendous vitality the unity which is inherent in man dictates his gestures and ripens his thoughts; between this mingling of water and sky, amid this feverish world in which languages, religions, manners, dress, and blood merge, everything is permitted. Instead of suspending the lacework of the colonnades in space, old Giovanni Buon will compel it to come forth from the pavement and will, without crushing it, understand how to place upon it an enormous cube of pink stone open only in a few places and bristling with thorns. The architectural paradox is swept away in the triumphal movement of life and conquest. The fantastic palaces emerge from the shadowy water like an Oriental night in which story-tellers, on the terraces, evoke the confused piles of milky bulbs and shafts of enamel that sleep in the moonlight. The long campaniles which launch upward remind one of

minarets. Here, without imprudence, one can load the ceilings of Gothic palaces with gold. The domes, which are to come from Rome, gaze without astonishment upon the cupolas from the Bosphorus. And the three rows of ancient columns, superimposed and framing the arched windows, above which lie nude statues, alternate, without offending the eye, from one façade to another, with slender rows of Arab or French colonnettes. As she will do with the painters, Venice drags into the vertigo of her glory and her sensuality all the architects who come to her from the Continent, from Verona, from Vicenza, from Ferrara, from Florence herself, so different from Venice that the influences of the two cities, seen in their ensemble and from a distance, appear antagonistic. Fra Giocondo, the Lombardis, Sanmicheli, Sansovino, and Andrea Palladio are transformed in Venice or even discover themselves there, and the architecture of the Italian Renaissance finds in the city a favorable ground for the development of the severe force which sometimes redeems its lack of logic and its decorative fantasies. The procession of palaces swings about with the waters, the narrow canals open and lose themselves amid the inclined houses which bathe their reflections in the dark pools; Chinese bridges outline their mass like that of an ass's back against perspectives of dappled and rippling water, of which one gets a momentary glimpse and loses sight the moment after. The harmony is maintained everywhere: it has developed from a single ideal of unrestrained abundance, from a single effort to dominate Oriental lands and seas, from a single history of victories, and from a single resplendent line of radiances and reflections that proceeds from the waves to the clouds after having so penetrated the stones that they

have its own color of seaweed steeped in azure and in fire.

## II

It is thanks to the unity of the Venetian symphony in which the stone, the atmosphere, and the water, the life of the people and of the princes, and commerce and history so spontaneously unite their multiple relationships in so narrow a space, and in surroundings so dense that great painting appeared in Venice almost mature from the very first, without offering the spectacle of the feverish struggle between memories and presentiments in which Florence had consumed her genius. Within fifty years it forged one of the most trustworthy weapons to meet the demands of the world in quest of new rhythms. It granted to material nature and our need for pleasure the dignity of immortal elements. Her sensual idealism burst forth with such force that it came quickly to its realization, and died as quickly from its own excesses. Venetian painting had scarcely any primitives.

Or rather, it was outside of Venice that her painters went to seek initiation. If we except the ill-determined but certain contribution of Jacopo d'Avanzo and of Altichieri, the old Veronese decorators who were contemporary with the last Gothic artists of Florence, it was Siena above all, the school of mysticism, who through Gentile da Fabriano kindled the fire on the hearth of Venice, which was nevertheless destined to devour the last vestige of mysticism in Italy. Gentile, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, had worked in Venice as well as in Rome, with Pisanello, the Veronese. The latter derived from Florence where Andrea del Castagno had taught him painting. He



PISANELLO. Portrait of Lionello d'Este. (*Accademia Carrara, Bergamo.*)

retained the sharp affirmation of the Tuscans, their spirit of decision, and the accent which is necessary to cut into the metal with a firm line of the medalist. Not since the days of the Syracusans had there been seen this firmness of casting, this savory and delicate modeling, this penetrating and vigorous elegance of expression. The innumerable sketches with which he filled his sketch books, when the ships at the Piazzetta discharged the exotic animals, the multicolored birds, the butterflies, and the unknown insects, rendered his hand supple for engraving. Almost Japanese in his grasp of the peculiarities of the animals, almost German in his sustained power of detail and in the somewhat linear quality of his material—like Mantegna, like da Vinci, and like so many other painters of northern Italy toward which Germany, through her merchants and her soldiers, had been descending continually for ten centuries—he saw Venice with Gentile, even before the Venetians did. Both artists came from the western slope, with minds almost mature. Both of them adored the processions, the trailing robes, the gold chains, the hats, the turbans, the furred cloaks, the magnificent confusion of peoples, and the wild maelstrom of the crowds in action. In return, it was through them that Italy, with Pinturricchio and with Gozzoli, accepted the picturesque invasion of the sailors and of the Orient and carried the first elements of romanticism into the Shakespearean cycle.

Jacopo Bellini, the true initiator of Venetian painting, had, moreover, come to know through others beside Pisanello the vigor of the old Tuscans. After Giotto, before Paolo Uccello and Filippo Lippi, Donatello had spent a long period at Padua, at the gates of Venice, where he had impressed all the local artists. Padua,

celebrated from the beginning of the thirteenth century, was another Florence, almost as rich in activity and in influence, but of a less literary character; more realistic, more scientific, to use the word which would later have been applied. Almost all the young painters of northern Italy—notably those strange Ferrarese, Cosimo Tura.



SCHOOL OF FERRARA. Fresco of the Schifanoia Palace, detail.  
(*Ferrara.*)

Ercole Roberti, Francesco Cossa especially, and Mantegna rougher and wilder, as poor and ragged as a wolf—went through, in the middle of the fifteenth century, the atelier of Squarcione of Padua, a great collector of ancient sculptures, who had traveled in Italy and, what was rarer at that time, in Greece. Padua, far more than Florence, submitted to the true influence of antiquity, toward which she was more directly led by the neighboring city of Venice, with its constant rela-



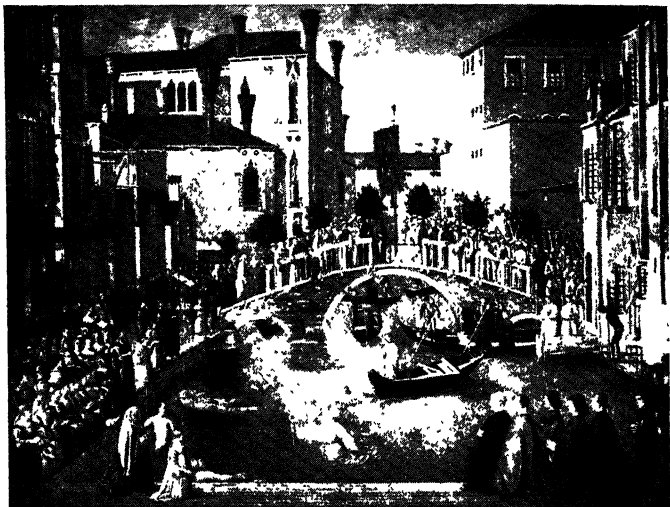
tionship with the Greek world and its merely nominal Christianity.

If the genius of Mantegna was able to resist the dangerous influence of a culture too strong to be accepted in his time, it was because the time burned with an incomparable flame. It was also because he found in the needs of his race the generalizing spirit evoked in the ancient times. He was perhaps the only man in Italy to draw direct and permanent inspiration from the marbles brought from Greece or discovered in the ground. Passionately he studied the collections of Squarcione; he did collecting himself and longed to go to Rome to see what remained of the crumbling walls and the buried temples. And it was through him that the soul of antiquity participated most substantially in building up the skeleton of a world which was obstinately seeking the sources of an old ideal. But happily his expressive vigor overpowered his erudition. The eye does not stop with the folds of the togas, the chariots, the acanthuses of the colonnades, the legends, the palms, the candelabra, the laurels, the crowns of consular pomp, and the external attributes of the triumphal processions which his learning enabled him to reconstitute for Italy, and the loss of which she had regretted. Though he was haunted by his care for historical accuracy and for local picturesqueness, though he was pursued by the memory of the Roman bas-reliefs hollowed out in the sarcophagi, the tense force of his lyricism overcomes all things and carries them away. An implacable will power casts the sculptural groups in a metallic mold from which the hard sound of the new universe escapes in spite of him. It is in vain that he restrains, presses down, and disciplines the life that rises within him: it makes the armor crack; it



SCHOOL OF FERRARA. Fresco of the Schifanoia Palace, detail.  
(*Ferrara.*)

swells the breasts, the arms, and the legs of the women; it bursts forth into the light and into the deep blue sky all sown with white clouds. It vibrates in the arrows which the pitiless bowmen shoot at Saint Sebastian. A strange artist, who tried to drink at every



GENTILE BELLINI. *The Miracle of the Holy Cross.*  
(*Accademia, Venice.*)

dried-up spring and who, finding only dead stones there, still knew how to animate them with that kind of intellectual frenzy in which a world eager for knowledge could console itself for its loss of feeling. This Latin sap, this noble Greek idealism which all his life he thought he owed to the works he studied so long and so closely, was already tormenting his race in the military statues and the meditative children of Donatello. He loved, without having been taught, the nude youth, the women who dance in a round with an animal



MANTEGNA. Calvary, detail. (*Louvre.*)

grace, the thick garlands of verdure stifling the fruits, the great precious landscapes that seem to be engraved with the edge of a diamond, the lofty architectures, the old Italian cities chiseled on the hills from which

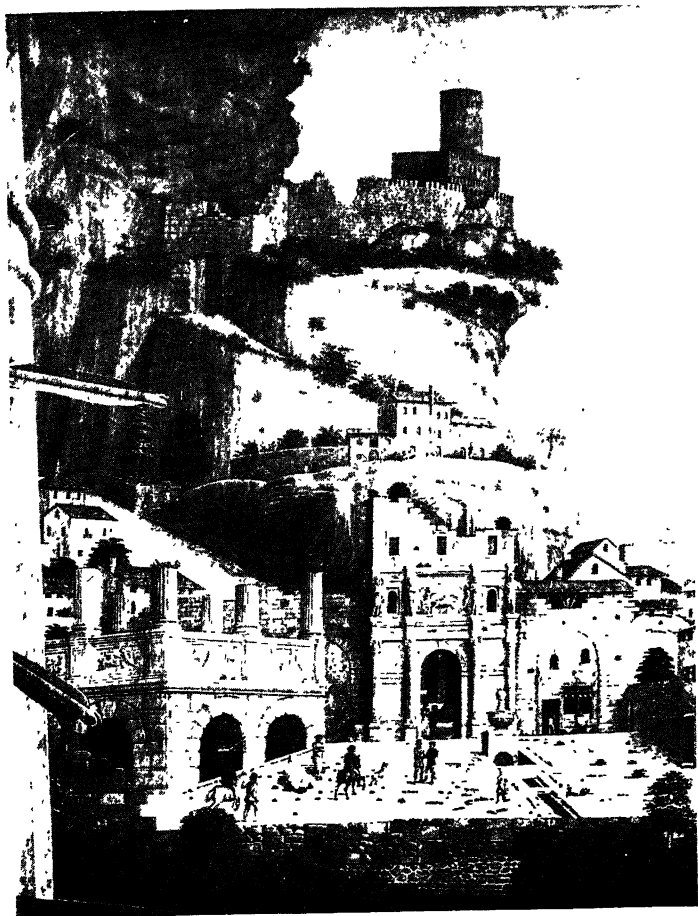


THE MADONNA AND CHILD.

(*Louvre.*)

thin trees arise, the roads, and the carefully tilled farms seen through the transparence of the morning. That reserve so difficult of approach, that vigorous elegance, that great virile drawing of a man accustomed to attacking the copper plate, that geometrical order in the scattered groups, those gestures whose sureness made them solemn and hieratic, almost funereal, like a farewell to dead ages—all that belongs to him. In it Piero della Francesca alone might have pointed out the indelible

trace of his own thought, and Italy's impetuous spring toward her tragic possession of the definitive form beyond which Michael Angelo was to find a gaping abyss of nothingness. Andrea Mantegna is so sure of approaching absolute realities by means of his hard



MANTEGNA. Saint Sebastian, detail. (*Louvre.*)

roads that, to give rhythm to his stride, he plays upon a harp of iron.

A mind of such vigor necessarily exerts upon the leading men, who are beginning to be tortured by the soul of Venice, an influence all the more lively that his mind differs from theirs. Mantegna was the bone structure which the gorgeous city covered with flesh and skin and over which she spread the splendor of her scenery and the glory of her sky. The painting of Crivelli, who was also trained by Squarcione, sad painting, as withered as dead wood, possesses really nothing which could lead one to suspect the approach of that vibration of living matter in which Giorgione, thirty years later, will see the birth of a new world. But Jacopo Bellini, who loved Mantegna enough to give him his daughter, has already seen the Venetian purple trembling in the dark basilica where the smoke of the candles rises like a vapor of blood. The double influence of his master Gentile da Fabriano and of his son-in-law Mantegna will affirm itself in his two sons through attaining, in the following generation, a harmony at the moment of maturity.

Giovanni Bellini started out from Mantegna, to cover the distance that leads to Giorgione. He lived ninety years and, in the course of even his life, witnessed the great dramatic movement which was to permit the painters of Venice to reject Platonist rationalism and to recover, at the end of their longing, the Dionysian spirit of the ancient world, dulled by a thousand years of repressed desires, weighed down by the deep voluptuousness and by the optimism resulting from sensuality, which it had voluntarily accepted. The dryness and the severity of the master of Mantua were to be absorbed little by little into his maturing sensibility as

the century advanced. He was the permanent witness and the principal actor in the decisive effort in which Venice discovered herself. While the Florentines were searching frantically for expressive line and for anatomical modeling, he had already discovered the secret of



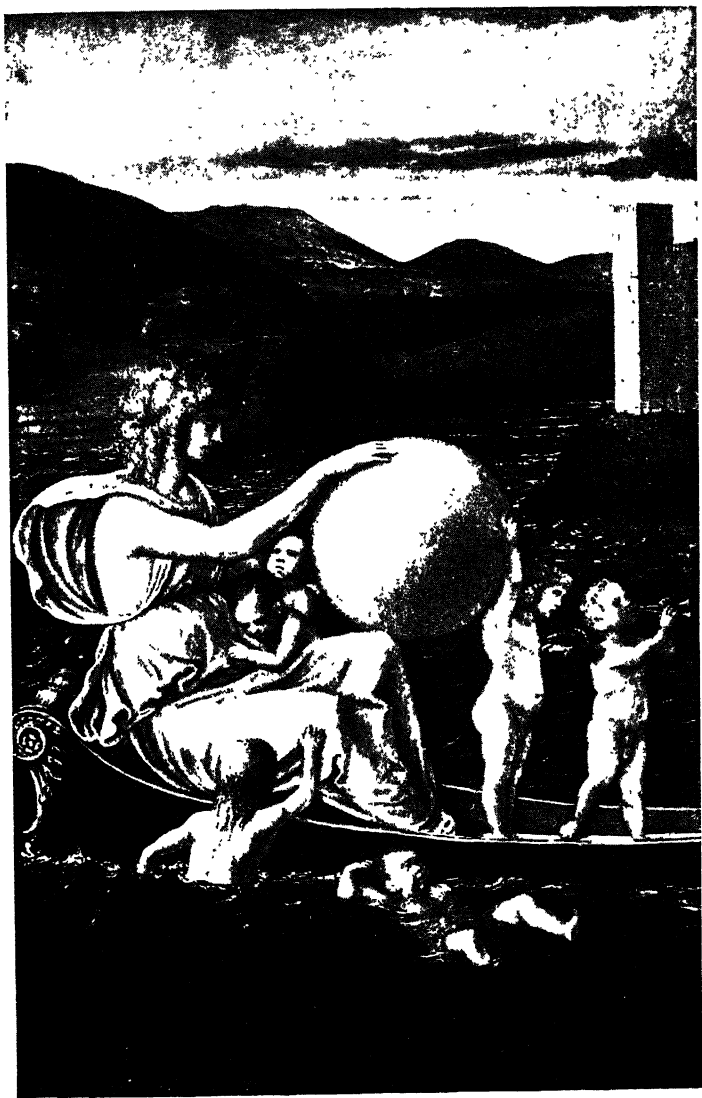
MANTEGNA. The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, detail.  
(*Louvre.*)

living modeling, and of the great simplified surfaces which give to bodies their fullness, their posture, and their weight. To be sure, they did not yet quiver under those waves of blood which cause their flesh to beat when they stretch out in the shade of the trees before Giorgione or Titian. Certain traces of primitive asceticism reveal their skeleton, dry up their skin, and tighten their faces from which suffering has not quite departed. But all of them, especially the Madonna and Child, are arrayed in those reds and those blues envel-



oped in gold which will be remembered by the painters to come; a tranquillity of soul causes them to forget the outraged mothers, the time of misery and massacres, and the dignity which obtains when we freely accept the functions of nature and attend to their performance without compunction. Toward the end of his life, the true light and the sky of Venice and sometimes the great forests which Titian will love enter into his pictures, and the somewhat cut-up landscapes of his earlier period begin to have mellowed lines, to grow gentler, and to breathe deeply. He gets a glimpse of the sea. He perceives the vibration of the world. He has almost completely shifted the scene of the drama and given over to space the form which, until then, had been a semiprisoner of the moral sentiment. He is the first to define the thing which lays the very foundation of the nature of Venice—its universal sensualism.

It rested, moreover, with the two sons of Jacopo to supply the great Venetians with the elements of the poem. Giovanni sought the expansion of the form in the currents that originate at its center and that carry it outward. Gentile himself brought to Venice the whole exterior of the earth, the sky, the foreigners, the Orient of which he had caught a glimpse and had felt deeply during a triumphal journey to Constantinople. While the Vivarini of Murano, hard and virile painters of the military age, were already watching the silken banners floating over the magnificent processions, Gentile was observing Venice from nearer by, its painted façades, its pink and green houses, its heavy canals, the carpets hung from the balconies, San Marco resplendent with gold and the solemn processions where the pure blacks were luminous alongside of the brilliant reds. There was scarcely any atmosphere as yet, but



GIOVANNI BELLINI. Venice, the Mistress of the World.  
(*Accademia, Venice.*)

instead an almost uniform ashy blondness. Lazzaro Sebastiani will not introduce his warm and golden harmonies until a little later. It is as if a crowd were already richly bedecked, but motionless and symmetrical, and as if waiting for some one to give it life. It was imperative that the most poetic imagination in the history of painting—perhaps with that of Gozzoli—summarize the work which ranges step by step from Gentile da Fabriano to Gentile Bellini in order to give its scope to that romantic Orientalism in which Shakespeare will gather up the inexhaustible, impetuous, and moving material that flows with the torrent of his dramas. When Vittore Carpaccio had traversed the world, there was in the cradle of Venetian thought something else besides flesh, space, and color; death, love, voluptuousness, and the extraordinary vividness of a dream had suddenly come in with the legend and with life. A fairy vision floated in the flags, the sound of pearls and of gold, of hope, and of memory. Painting was free to transpose all the victories over desire and illusion into their absolute harmonies.

When one confronts the work of Carpaccio with that of the two Bellinis, one seems to see a rough drawing of the powerful trinity through whom the glory of Venice has stretched across time. Giovanni, Gentile, and Carpaccio are Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto: a Titian less fully developed, less in harmony with all the elements of life which he encompasses symphonically: a more timid Veronese who distributed with far less luxuriance all the fabulous treasures of the seas amassed by four or five centuries of commerce and victories; a Tintoretto less stormy, less tragic, but one who is quite as impassioned and so free in his rapture, so abundant and fresh that, beside him, the soul of the great dramatist

of painting seems troubled and as dangerous as a poisoned river.

Like the good primitive that he still was, Carpaccio told all that he knew in each one of his canvases. It is true that he knew much. One may love him for his



GIOVANNI BELLINI. Jesus Receives the Chalice.  
(*National Gallery.*)

anecdotes, for he is a wonderful story-teller. But the anecdote, always transfigured and magnified, always a motive for painted decorations and transpositions, is lost in the poetic sentiment which lifts up and frees everything. The sea is covered with boats and with ships. The city is as exact and new as that which Bellini paints, but more somber harmonies announce its maturity. Through their high arcades, the palaces permit us to see masts with pennants flying from them, the multicolored pavements of the great docks where merchants and promenaders come and go before the vessels at anchor. We see also leprous houses, dirty

clothes hung from one façade to the other across the plague-ridden canals, and the incredible swarm of beggars, boatmen, jugglers, and ruffians. There are people everywhere: in the streets, on the staircases, on the bridges, and on the terraces. Lords and ladies file by, people are chatting, people are parading, people bend



GIOVANNI BELLINI. Portraits. (*Berlin Museum.*)

the knee before princes who receive in the open air. Palm trees grow in solitary squares, an unexpected camel is seen outlined at the corner of a dock, and the lion of Saint Jerome actually treads the pavement of the Piazzetta dragged along by a black lion-tamer around whom the street boys dance gayly. Carpaccio mingles with the crowd, he listens, he gossips, he is out of doors all day long. The violins and the brass instruments of the showmen creak and snore; the showman's nasal patter excites jest and laughter. The good

painter is in the very first rank. Everything amuses him, but if one keeps one's eye upon him one sees why his face becomes serious at times. In some corner he has seen a strange isolated figure which holds his attention: a sick man, an old woman, a sorcerer, a monkey dressed up, or a buffoon, and at once the problem of destiny is before him, with the ugliness or the evil or the sneering of the devil at the turn of the flowery road. . . . He becomes pensive and turns aside, the sound of the music dies away. The women whose faces are too heavily painted, with heavy mops of dyed hair, signal to him from a balcony. He goes up. And here he is



CRIVELLI. Coronation of the Virgin.  
(Brera, Milan.)

in the company of filthy little dogs, obscene monkeys, and cooing doves, and is confused by the thick perfumes and the shining eyes. He yields, he is sick at heart, he is sad, he wanders aimlessly. From the streets he peers to the recesses of solitary rooms. And here he finds peace. When he sees little girls sleeping in their little bed, he visits them with the fairies and goes away on tiptoe after having placed a pretty bouquet on the table. He has already resumed his

place in the processions and the festivals, amid the bishops dressed in red and gold. He knows that the blasts of the trumpet will bring forth people from the houses, and spectators to lean from the windows, and he knows that the spectacle is all for him. Then he sails with the ships. To all the far corners of the earth he follows the good Christian knights who go forth to fight the dragon. History, legend still heavy with troubled Gothic poetry, life invariably unforeseen, the dream which is sometimes of blood, all these things clash together in throngs—precise, almost devoid of gesture, but carried along by a decorative and dramatic sentiment into a lyricism of color from which the soul of Venice blazes forth with such ingenuous pride that neither Titian nor Tintoretto nor Veronese will be any the less sensible of it when they come to express it with their greater means. A charming spirit, very Italian, very Oriental, a trifle barbarous, a trifle mad, who feels coursing through him a breath of freedom that brings with it in a hundred thousand scattered images the marvelous echo of the great voyages which are beginning, the presentiment of the islands of perfume, the forests filled with golden birds, the unknown tribes, and the new constellations. The blues, almost black, of the dead water, the forest of red banners, the reds and the greens which are wedded by a glaze of golds, the fanfare of the skies, the seas, the buildings, the great lace robes, the blues, the greens, the blacks with their deep and sustained accompaniment of the reds burst forth in dull sonorous tones which seem to echo in the trumpets of the heralds.

## III

The last of the Bellinis was finishing his long labor of technical preparation and of the maturing of the

senses, and Carpaccio was collecting, in a burst of intense rapture, all the decorative and picturesque elements upon which the great painters will draw for almost a century, at the moment when Venetian power was shaken by the fall of Constantinople, which closed the Orient to her, and by the maritime discoveries which gave to the world a new center of commerce. The city then recoiled upon herself to reach her depths through the soul of her artists. Venice was like a being overflowing with strength and health whose need to organize life against the incessant assaults of difficult surroundings and of semibarbarous peoples had left no time to indulge in pleasure. Once the city had tasted of pleasure, she yielded herself without restraint; she gave herself over to the desires and the energy of which her senses had accumulated so rich a store. She died of it, like those animals so bursting with life that they die in the act of reproduction. Her death transmitted to the future, in inner wealth, the outward opulence which she had amassed for six centuries.

Giorgione, Palma, Lorenzo Lotto, Bonifazio, Basaiti, Pordenone, Sebastiano del Piombo, and Titian, all pupils or disciples of Giovanni, arrived together to pluck the fruits which were bending down the branches, and at the same time to celebrate, in a frenzy of painting never attained before, the rehabilitation of material nature, to which man is invariably forced to return when he has been wandering for too long a time in the beautiful desert of the pure idea; to celebrate also the death struggle and apotheosis of that sensuality of which the ancient world had bequeathed the legend. From that time on, like products of the earth, overflowing pellmell from baskets filled to overflowing, and spreading over the roads to the rhythm of the step of



those who carry them, the pictures and frescoes are scattered in the palaces, on the walls, in the churches quite as much and even more than in other places—telling the story of the festivals, fêtes, dances, concerts



CARPACCIO. Courtesans on a Balcony.  
(*Museo Civico, Venice.*)

in great miraculous settings, the depths of the skies, the forests, the springs, the nude flesh quivering with warmth as it awaits the passage of love.

The unity of sentiment, of action, of surroundings, and of life was such that one among the painters of this time may define almost all of them. Titian contains the whole of Venice, from the Bellinis to Veronese and even to Tiepolo. But Titian is more than sketched in Giorgione, born the

same year with him and dying two thirds of a century before him; and if the pious and gentle and discreet Lorenzo Lotto, who, before Veronese, saw the fine ash of Venice raining upon his color, has gathered up only certain surface reflections from the greatest painters, Palma and Sebastiano del Piombo, Basaiti and Bonifazio himself, and even the severe

Pordenone who was officially his rival, all resemble Titian. They all have, in a less ample and less personal way, the larger part of his profound quality. Moreover, they had no hesitation about borrowing ideas and images. They lived by continuous exchanging, like the

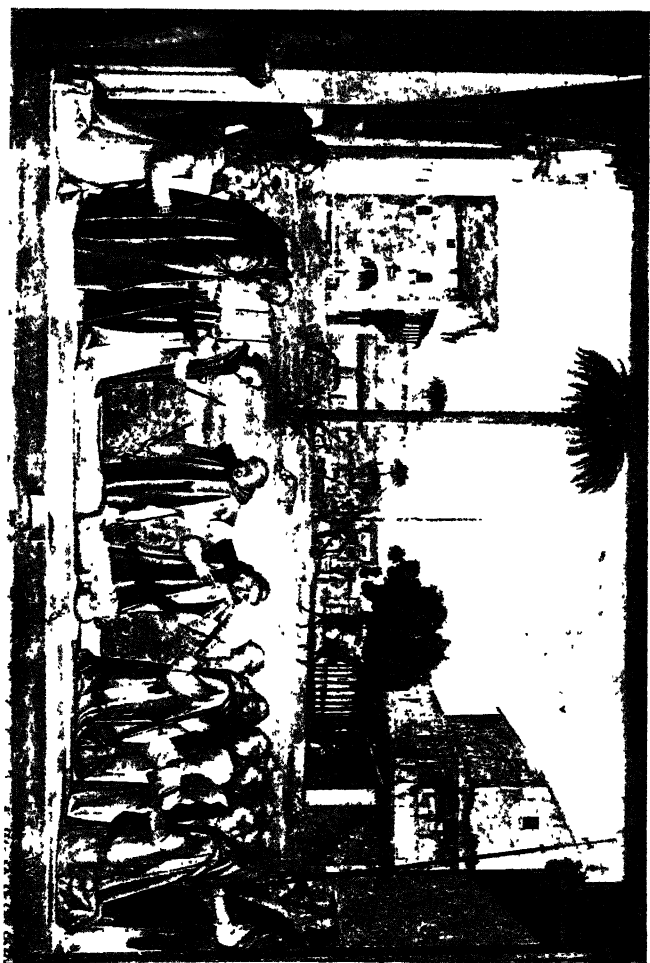


CARPACCIO. Death of St. Jerome, detail. (*San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice.*)

population and the atmosphere of their city. It is in times of national anæmia that the artists resort to economies. When life has this exuberance, it takes no note of its borrowing. The creeping vines of tropical forests do not prevent the trees about whose branches they entangle themselves from growing tall and wide. Among all the contemporaries of Titian, we find the same abundance, the same compelling and peaceful power of transposing the elements of the universe into

a new order, generalizing and lyrical, and of bathing life and the space in which it moves in the golden amber of the background, from which there arises a red vapor.

The "Concert Champêtre" marks the decisive moment of the great painting; it is the point of departure for Titian. The symphony is born and wells up suddenly; its waves seek and penetrate one another; all the blood of Venice is concentrated in a single heart, a warm heart, regular and calm, which sends forth life with the admirable power of him who is master of himself. A world which is to die, for the first time and with all its means affirms the immortality of desire, of music, and of the intelligence, by associating them with unchanging nature, which offers itself up for their justification. The powers of fecundation retire into themselves and wait in the depths for the moment of full maturity. With Giorgione, the autumn of Venice begins, a heavy splendor, the sonorousness of the seasons when the fruits seem to concentrate the flame and heat of the sun, when their translucent purple barely arrests the light, when the evening is copper-colored, when the women, glowing under their first caresses and heavy in their first maternity, adorn their flesh with great necklaces of amber. Their skin is golden and almost somber, as if the blood that flushes it had received through it a kiss from each one of the burning days which have dawned since the world learned the meaning of pleasure. And yet, in the heart of the deep landscape where they lie, the blue landscape sinking in the distance, their bodies take on a royal splendor like a living sun which spreads over the russet cottages and over the noble groups of trees a glow so warm and so rich that it seems to forbid the winter from returning and the night from falling again. We scarcely know Giorgione, we cannot



CARACCIOLO Death of St. Jerome. (*San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice.*)

affirm the authenticity of more than three or four of his works, but we cannot imagine them otherwise than bathed in the atmosphere of a late summer afternoon, when the motionless light is amassed in the stifling shadow, when one would imagine that the wind rose only to make us perceive perfumes which until then had been in material form. Perhaps it was well that he died young, thus giving time to the more severe and patient genius of Titian to gain possession of itself. His painting is as intoxicating as an overheavy wine.

It has been said of this painting, of Titian's above all, of that of Veronese, and of all the painters of Venice, with the exception perhaps of Tintoretto, that it is altogether objective, that it never reveals the opinion of the artist respecting the meaning and the morality of the world. It is a question of words. There is no one among those for whom form is but a means of translating pure ideas, whether he is called Giotto, or da Vinci or Michael Angelo, who is not gifted, in the highest degree, with the sense of living reality and who does not incorporate it with his own substance after having experienced it passionately. There is no one among those for whom form is an end, whether he is called Titian, Rubens, or even Velasquez, who does not discontinue his objectivism the moment that he is finished assembling the elements of his work in order to transpose them all into an imaginary reality which will define his mind. All the languages that we speak, painting as well as the others, symbolize our thought, and whether it accepts or does not accept the world, the world which it expresses will be a living world if our thought is living; our thought will live if the world which expresses it has been penetrated by that thought. Michael Angelo and Titian, though, without doubt,

they started from different horizons, meet halfway along their journey.

Titian, in this group of great Venetians at the beginning of the heroic period, is, moreover, through his great compositions, his nudes, his landscapes, and his



CARPACCIO. Saint Triphon, detail. (*San Giorgio degli Schiaroni, Venice.*)

portraits, the one among them all who most frequently returns to Nature in order to concentrate her in the narrow space of a canvas, after having co-ordinated in his will and his desire all the elements of form, color, light, and sentiment, through which she imposes love. Palma Vecchio, who is so magnificent with his big, blond-haired women, abandons himself to the intoxication of painting the colors of flesh and of stuffs; he has not that rhythm, as vast as sensibility and as tense as reason, by means of which Titian presents his thought

to us. Sebastiano del Piombo, who lived for more than thirty years at Rome, is captivated there by the masters of its school. Superb painter he is, with a somber splendor that glows about his dark women with their peaceful eyes, with their large, full bodies, almost animal in character, wherein something of the immense



CIMA DA CONEGLIANO. The Madonna and Child, detail.  
(*National Gallery.*)

circulation of life that Venice will discover in nature penetrates the thick muscles, the breasts, the backs, the arms, and the legs, as if the sense of volume which Rome gave were too limited to maintain this life and had allowed it to overflow on all sides. But he is dominated by Raphael, to whom, in return, he reveals as much of Venice as Raphael needed in order to make his work a synthesis of Italy, and he is dominated even more by Michael Angelo, whom he will imitate too frequently. Giorgione is dead, Lorenzo Lotto effaces

himself in his discreet melancholy, Pordenone, Basaiti, and Bonifazio remain artists of the second rank. Titian is to fill an entire century, summarize the whole extent and duration of Venice, reveal Tintoretto and Veronese to themselves, dominate Europe through the works which he sends forth behind the armies of Charles the Fifth, define forever the language of painting, project upon the future the shadows of Rubens, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Poussin, Watteau, Delacroix, and the modern landscapists, and justify, by his last works, the audacities of the artists of our time.

## IV

Titian has painted universal life. When he listens to its voices, one would say that he was indifferent. They all enter into him with equal rights; the bodies of children, the flesh of women, virile faces, gorgeous or sober costumes, architectures, the earth with its trees and its flowers, the sea, the sky, and all the wandering atoms which make it impossible for the sea and the sky to cease combining their forces. Creative enthusiasm raises him to such a height that his serenity does not desert him even when this entire world, assimilated and recreated in a new order, issues from him in waves continually increasing in length and breadth. He organizes his world into symphonies in which everything that is human resounds in uninterrupted echoes through everything that lives with an instinctive and obscure life, where everything that is material penetrates the human forms and fuses with them for eternity.

In Venice one no longer finds detached edges in the diamond of the atmosphere, there are no more of those imperious lines cutting out the hills and the graded terraces against the sky. There is nothing but the



space in which objects tremble, combine, and become dissociated; a world of reflections, modified, inverted, suppressed, or renewed repeatedly by the hours of the day and by the seasons; it is an animated opal in which the iridescence of the light, seen through watery vapor, forbids the defining of colors and lights and causes the



GIORGIONE (?). *The Flagellation.* (*Church of San Rocco, Venice.*)

very forms to appear like transitory objects which are continually coming forth from matter in movement only to return into it and be merged with it before issuing forth again. On the palaces, red-brown or purple, or covered with a crust of musty gold, all the colors of the prism are awakened, are effaced, come to light again, and prolong themselves as if drawn out in thick strokes, to render obscure the quivering contours



GIORGIONE. The "Concert Champêtre," detail. (*Louvre.*)

of stones in the dull water in which the fermentation of organic matter caused phosphorescences to roll. The mirror of the sea casts its reflections into the vapors that arise from it under the downpour of light, and when these vapors pass in clouds over the glistening canals, the sky throws back thick shadows upon them and reflects the airy phantom of the waters in which the choppiness of the waves mingles the turquoise and the vermilion, the greens, the golden yellows, the reds, and the oranges of the façades decorated with flags and of the processions of gondolas.

All the painting of Titian is here, and after it all the painting of Venice, and after the painting of Venice all the painting that has life, which sees colors penetrating one another, reflections playing upon surfaces, transparent shadows taking on color—painting in which no tone is ever repeated in the same manner, but dominates by discreetly reminding one of itself, thereby awakening in the eye the vibration of neighboring hues, the luminous life of the world, creating a spontaneous symphony not one beat of which will be born of matter without our being able to discover the cause of it and to seek its effect in the whole of its extent. Doubtless, the discipline gained from the work of Mantegna, later on the influence of Rome, and above all the sensuality which led them necessarily to discover form, the form full and circular which we invariably discover at the conclusion of an investigation into plastics, caused the Venetian painters to see everything gravitating around the volumes which alone are capable of giving us a durable and solid image of the world of our senses. But the Venetians never attained sculptural expression, and Sansovino, their sculptor, who came, however, from Florence, even developed among them a concep-



GIORGIONE (?) The Judgment of Solomon. (*Uffizi.*)

tion of form which, in its shading, vagueness, and grandeur approached that of their painting. Titian always stops at the instant when, at the edges of the mass that turns before him to vanish in the distant plains, he observes the quivering caress of the atmosphere which, by the gradation of its values, unifies the mass



SEBASTIANO DEL PIOMBO. The Death of Adonis. (*Uffizi.*)

with the volumes of the forests, the clouds, the mountains perceived in the distance. Line has disappeared. The spots of color graded down evoke form sufficiently for it to participate in the life of all space. So the continuity which gives life to the work is no longer found in that inner instinct for social solidarity which, for the artists of the Middle Ages, held things together by invisible bonds; neither is it found in the intellectual arabesque which defined this unity for the mind rather than for the senses: it is in the mutual dependence of all the elements of the world, the forms, the lines, the



TITIAN. *The Three Graces*, detail. (*Galleria Borghese, Rome.*)

colors, and the air that unites them; and if, among the Venetians, the moral sentiment seems to efface itself from life, it is to allow the rise, in an irresistible explosion, of the sensual sentiment of the whole body of nature which Christianity had forgotten. Titian not only prevented the original sin of breaking through the symbolic frontiers within which Michael Angelo had inclosed it once more, but, by bringing about a more perfect unity in the infinite complexity of all the relationships whose logical interweaving makes a harmonious and living universe, he finished the work of Masaccio, completed that of Bellini, consecrated that of Giorgione, and, before Rabelais, before Shakespeare, before Rubens, before Velasquez and Rembrandt, and long before the German musicians, he announced the modern spirit. He created the symphony. He is the father of painting.

The aristocratic nature inherited from his noble ancestors had been tempered by the elementary force of the country where he was born, at the foot of the Tyrolean Alps, among the lakes and the beech forests above which rises the rampart of the pink Dolomite peaks. Cima da Conegliano had had before his eyes the same mountain landscapes, the same transparent skies, and the blue waters in which sleep the silhouettes of the fortified castles, and when he painted the delicate altar pictures whose clearly defined figures recall his master Giovanni Bellini less than they do Mantegna, he supplied from his own mind scarcely more than the subtle frame, aerial and poetic, which he purposed to give them. Titian, who was less than twenty years younger, certainly knew him and studied him, and sought in his work the confirmation of his own presentiments. Later on, whenever he left Venice—and he departed frequently, especially after the descent of

Charles the Fifth upon Italy—he carried with him his sense of space trembling from molecular vibration, and when, on his travels, he found himself among lakes,



TITIAN. Salome. (*Prado.*)

woods, and plains sown with low cottages and clusters of green oaks, he felt the confused poetry of the earth as it had never been felt before.

Thenceforward, space enveloped with its waves the pagan poems with which he was overflowing; they expanded in great dazzling shapes of coppery flame, in fruits that rolled from baskets amid the clang of tambourines and cymbals during the stormy afternoons



when Dionysius and his train of nude fauns and bacchantes burst forth with a great clamor from thick woodlands. The men of those times, having escaped from the Christian world, possessed such reserves of love that they could yield to their passions without haste, without turning back, without loss of vigor, with the peaceful certitude of nature's elements. While the bacchanale roars and voluptuousness mingles its panting breath with the cry of the panthers, the earth breathes like a beast. The skies are full of low-hanging clouds charged with lightning; blue vapors arise like a sweat; a subterranean sap circulates through the soil, scatters white foam on the surface of the brooks, and swells the black thickets where nude men and women, clasped in each other's arms, glow like red gold. But it is only with Tintoretto that the human drama will resound to the borders of the thunderous sky in tragic clouds and purple lightning. Here space is unconscious whether its storms strain the nerves of men and women; the men and women are unaware of the fact that they are participating in the heedless symphonies in which the violence of the primitive instincts is only one note in the sound from the dark thickets, in the murmur of the fountains, in the breaths of hot air that drive along the clouds, in the distant lowing of the herds that descend the sloping meadows, and in the great silence of the plains that vanish in the vapor of the summer days.

The beautiful mature bodies of the Venetian courtesans were displayed before him on broad beds, wearing only a necklace about their throats, and holding a tuft of roses in the hollow of their hands, or they lay under the trees before a kneeling faun; and the beautiful, mature bodies glowed with the same serenity

that he had found in the earth. They were waiting. Love was for them a thing accepted unaffectedly, filled with a tranquil intoxication, without disquietude or remorse. Their eyes were the calm eyes of animals, in



TITIAN. Paul III and his Nephews. (*Museum of Naples.*)

which swim the russet reflections of their heavy hair and of the space gathering around them which envelops them in amber. Their breasts rose and fell slowly, their bellies had waves of muscles which merge in the angle of shadow formed by the broad thighs as they come together. With his brush Titian amassed the heavy



TITIAN. Doge Gritti. (*Czernin Gallery, Vienna.*)

atmosphere in order to knead it with the substance of the soil, the pulp of the fruits, and the sap of the oaks. And with it all he mingled that winelike purple dipped in gold, which is like a triumphal background for the Venetian apotheosis, which weighs on the shoulders of the bishops in the penumbra flaming within the churches, which dyes the robes of the Doges, unfurls itself from the top of masts and balconies and floats behind the gondolas, which shimmers on façades, stains the walls and floors in the halls of the Ducal Palace with blood as if it were rising through the pores of the stone dungeons below where the Council of Ten caused its decrees to be executed, fills the twilights, trembles in the reflections of the lanterns at the evening water-festivals, and which the sails of the ships trail over the sea.

When Titian abandoned that impassive sensual idealism which was the dominating force of his activity, he discovered in the somber purple, lit up by golden spangles, and tempered by fire and sulphur, a powerful and tragic atmosphere, enabling him to enter the human drama with the decision and vigor of which only a great spirit is capable, a spirit which continued to grow up to his hundredth year. It is that bloody light shed by the flickering torches which brings out of the shadow, where the executioners torture Him, that terrible "Christ Crowned with Thorns," painted, as was the "Pieta," one of the most melancholy and human works in the history of painting, when he was more than ninety-five—a painting in which there was a premonition of the genius of Rembrandt. It is this bloody light which rises with the dawn and streaks the black iron armor of Charles the Fifth as he comes forth from a black wood, his livid countenance touched by red



TITIAN. The Original Sin. (*Prado.*)

reflections as he bestrides a black horse caparisoned with red—a horrible symphony of murder, a painting of night and of blood.

Thus there were two directions to his nature which parted at the common center of his limitless receptivity and of his acceptance of life; to organize themselves into vast sensual poems, or to scrutinize the moral world with a cruelty as impassable as his lyricism had seemed. There are no portraits, in Italy or elsewhere, which surpass his. They have that power of defining character which caused the Florentines—Donatello, Andrea del Castagno, Verrocchio, Ghirlandajo, Filippi Lippi, Botticelli at times, and even Benvenuto—to produce such terrible effigies, concentrated, nervous, frenzied, and cut out in the mold of passion. Only, these are draped with decorative fullness and searched out with a tranquil penetration unknown to Florence. The fever that consumed her painters no longer exists in Titian. He can paint with a sincerity so uncompromising that it leaves to the Cæsars and to the popes their malformed skulls, their atrophied masks, their jaws of beasts, and their hideous and low mien; he can describe those black-garbed silhouettes, those muscular hands that clutch the hilts of swords, and those pale countenances with haggard eyes, all those violent men made for murder as women are made for love. It is the period in which the *Condottiere* holds Italy in his grasp, when Machiavelli writes *The Prince*. Titian's heads summarize all Italy, from the ferocious portraits of Antonello da Messina who had brought to Venice the oil painting of the Flemings, and from the tightly drawn faces of Giovanni Bellini to the broad, somewhat soft effigies of that fine painter Paris Bordone, and to the great figures of the Doges which



TITIAN. Nymph and Shepherdess. (*Vienna.*)

momentarily arrested the disordered, gorgeous, and brutal vision of Tintoretto.

## v

Between Tintoretto and Titian, who resemble each other so much at first view, as Veronese resembles them,

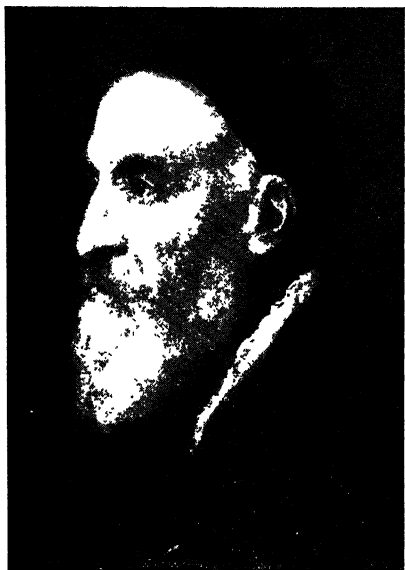


TITIAN. Diana and Actæon. (*Prado.*)

as all the Venetians resemble one another when the eye lets itself be dazzled by those heaped-up forms now brilliant, now somber under the red sunlight of the horizons of the sea, there is, however, even if their language has often the same images and the same sonorousness, almost an antagonism of soul. We see two Italians, two Venetians, of whom one might be a Greek, the



other a Hindu. With the former, despite the grandeur of his creation, simple and sober though it is, a rhythm to which his exuberance yields as a river of blood yields to the heart, the will, issuing from the same sources as



TITIAN. Portrait of the Painter,  
detail. (*Prado.*)

his sensibility, rises to the same plane, and without effort. With the latter, it is an orgy, a panting and torn rhythm like that of an element which has burst its dykes, the will ever straining to resist the frightful and continual assault of the most sensual nature that without doubt ever appeared in Occidental art, the will ever swept away and whirling like a straw in the wind. A torrent of sulphur and lava after the

regular eruption of the autumns, the springtimes, and the summers.

He is a Michael Angelo in reverse. He had seen him, he would have liked to resemble him. "The coloring of Titian and the drawing of Michael Angelo," he said. He was never either the one or the other. He was never entirely master of himself, and the thing about him that astounds us is his perpetual defeat, even as the thing

in Michael Angelo that subjugates us is his perpetual victory. He was Tintoretto, and that is a great deal. It is something so great that one hesitates at the threshold of the work, declaring it hollow and loose through fear of entering upon it. He was one of the miracles of art, something supremely elegant like naked strength, and as vulgar as strength that tries to don a garment, "the most terrible brain," said Vasari, "that painting has ever possessed"—a bestial hero.

In the history of his mind there are obscure depths. So much strength could well up only from an abyss of sensuality and torment. His life of passion is confused. It is filled with silent or brutal tragedies resulting from his unquenchable desire. He worked by the light of lamps, moving his tumultuous crowds about in the shadow where fires are flickering. He was a musician. He surrounded his painting with the sound of agonizing harmonies which the violoncello snatched in the contractions of his heart. He was swept away in the symphonic storm which arose from all of that intoxicating and triumphal painting, and with which Veronese mingles the voice of sonorous instruments the better to glorify life and heaven. He lived in the sinister glare of visions of color and of monstrous sensations which did not leave him a minute of repose.

With frescoes and with canvases he covered a hundred walls of churches, of palaces, of schools, and cloisters—often for nothing, merely for his own satisfaction. He was like a subterranean gulf, too choked with flames, stones, and smoke, and with a mouth too small to give them an outlet. Everything issued from him in explosions, and scattered at random in ragged pieces, in a rain of ashes and soot, and in sparks that mounted to the zenith. As others improvised a madrigal, he impro-



TITIAN. Christ Crowned with Thorns. (*Pinakothek, Munich.*)

vised epics. As others handle physiognomies and gestures through colors and volumes, he handled the crowds, the sea, and the clouds through his light and darkness—not according to the dictates of his mind, but according to the dictates of the savage instincts imposed by his senses. The crowds, the sea, and the clouds were voices that responded to his tempests.

His forms interwoven, disjointed, combating each other or falling to pieces, clustered like grapes or loose, drawn out and shaken from one end to the other by the ideas and feelings that were swept



TINTORETTO. A Senator. (*Prado.*)

away in the vertigo of a mind consumed by the anguish of fecundation—these forms he had not the time to incorporate into the wall in order to form a block. Powerful in structure, made to suffer by his haste, but which he cannot carry further, being always driven onward in the delirium of his imagination, he allowed the forms to blend on the wall like the dust and sand scraped off by a hurricane. The Italian arabesque which Titian had carried into the substance of space floated in whirlwinds like a broken garland, and when he man-

aged to unite its pieces with the flame of his dream, it dragged after it such masses of tangled forms that it disappeared under them. What does it matter! One felt the arabesque in the quivering depths, in the very dynamism of that tangle. The sudden gesture that strikes or curses or implores is so spirited, it appears in the midst of the drama with such vigor, that it carries with it the whole drama, which we re-enact in our minds. One might say that the painter, from the visible side of the forms, was giving expression to all the invisible surfaces which are made to converge by the lines of force, in the hand, the arm, the leg, the torso, or the face in action. Like an athlete overwhelmed by the rising tide of a confused, organic matter in which only the light of intelligence could distinguish differences and impose directions, Tintoretto grasped the situation in its entirety and wrestled with it so vigorously that it was suddenly formulated, characterized, and organized in all its elements at once. He plunged so deeply into the substance of Venice that only his forehead rose above it. But with what a fiery glance he caused its life to shine forth! Greco bursts from him like a flame, like a hymn from the *Paradise*, that concert of angels, the masterpiece of the painted symphony, in which the subject does not appear, but in which the blue, the silver, the red, the amber, and the gold exalt, in a sonority, now veiled, now triumphant, the glory of space, of music, and of the eternal rhythm under which the universe will henceforth appear to man when he has felt its presence in his heart.

When the spirit mounts in whirlwinds, one discovers where the fire is burning. Tintoretto is the most truth-revealing of all the Venetians. His lyricism belongs to the soil. Venice, the resplendent, lives in him surely,

the theatrical and romantic Venice of the processions and the Orient, but also the trivial Venice, the southern and Levantine port where the colors which dye the robes and draperies of the triumphs were made from the rotting rags that ferment in the humidity and the sun. The house of the father of Jesus is a carpenter-shop, the crowd that climbs to Calvary with him is the crowd of the Riva degli Schiavoni, and the tumult of the Cruci-



TINTORETTO. The Finding of Moses. (*Prado.*)

fixion is the clamor of a mob. Workmen's tools, bread, and meats lie about in disorder with necklaces of pearls or of coral, mirrors, and golden combs. The odor of the sweating crowds and the odor of the beautiful women intoxicated him like blending poisons. The swan that caresses the splendor of Leda has come out of a chicken coop.

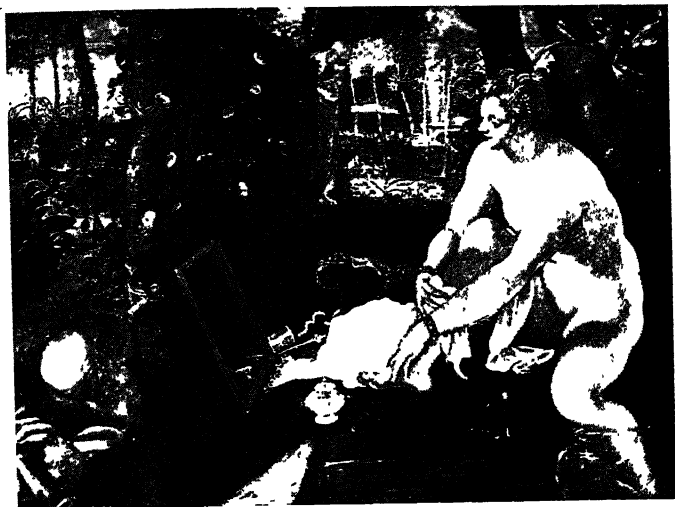
The history lived each day gave life even to the anachronism. The men of that time had not the leisure to ransack libraries. And then they had always the Mediterranean mind. It did not change much more than the soil and the light. The turbans, the patrician robes, the animals, and the marvelous fruits entered

into the palaces of Venice to meet Italian merchants and women with bare shoulders; and the immobile Orient brought by the sailors with their wares and their tales mingled biblical history with living history, pagan legend with sensual truth in the eternity of the second which was seized by a man of genius. Tintoretto is the historian of the terrible Republic

That which vivifies and dramatizes the whole, which links it with his spirit, is the somber Venice of the stormy days and evenings, the Venice whose pavement and black waters shine with sulphurous reflections. Here are vistas, the silver seas, and skies having the transparence of colored diamonds; here above all are nocturnal seas, skies in which the clouds are thick and viscous like clots of blood. There are the orange and the sinister coppery tones that Titian had not perceived until the end of his life, when the twilight of the years was darkening like that of the sky, phosphorescent greens like the mold on the sticky soil of the markets where the mud of the lagoon is poured out with the fish; and there are vinous reds that turn almost black and in which the gold gleams no more save as a star gleams when it is about to be extinguished.

In this murky atmosphere, the great nude bodies of the Venetian women shone in splendor. Each time that Tintoretto encountered woman, a kind of concentration of the forces which he was incessantly exchanging with the external universe took place in him. Even when he was painting the "Last Judgment," even at the moment when he was hurling her into endless torment, he covered her with ardent caresses. The fumes of intoxication which mounted to his brain from everything that had a form, a color, a perfume, or a sound, and that caused a kind of purple mist to rise before his eyes was

suddenly dissipated. The divine substance in which it became elaborated and which transmits the human flame invaded him like a dawn. Everything was transfigured. Tintoretto sang of the flesh with such a lyric exaltation that, with a single bound, he cleared the threshold of that loftier region into which the incessant



TINTORETTO. *Susanna Bathing.* (*Imperial Gallery, Vienna.*)

effort of his moral idealism had not been able to gain him admission. Giorgione, Sebastiano del Piombo, and Titian had remained deeply within the orbits of a calm sensuality into which descended the gold that comes at the end of day when the somber sun floods everything with its memory; the gold that comes at the end of the seasons when the vegetable world stores up in its tissue all the rays shed during the summer months. Tintoretto joins with Veronese to break through the shining gates inside of which the mind meets the light. And



when they come to celebrate the apotheosis of woman, upon whom the soul of Venice, in the sixteenth century, concentrates all its passion, both of them come forth from the bedchamber of purple where the reclining forms had been shown to the eyes of Titian a mass of blond light; they go beyond the edge of the dark forests in which the nude bodies illumine the bluish shadow, they cross the lagoon only to fix upon their palette the opal and the coral, and the opaque or translucent stones which turn with the shadows of the palaces inverted amid the scintillation of the waves. As if to compel the soul of the world to enter the great sacred bodies, the hollow of the backs, the fleshy haunches, the breasts, the arms, the thighs, the knees, and the necks of mother-of-pearl weighed down by the blond hair braided with great pearls, they mingled the amber and the foam of the waters with the glittering space showered with the ashes of stars, where the snow of the solitudes with the azure of night and the mist of the nebulæ stream forth like milk. The conquerors of the sea have made the conquest of the sky.

## VI

Venice had seen the hour when, especially with Titian, she had become conscious of herself; she had seen, broadening out to the very limit of space, everything that constituted her own substance, her palaces, her feasts, the water of her lagoons, the flesh of her women, the wooded plains, and the horizons of the mountains which extended to her gates. Hence, the somewhat somber harmonies—golden, red, and blue—which resounded in her skies. Tintoretto had used the dramas of space, mingling them with the substance of Venice, to give expression to the dramas which burned



TINTORETTO. The Massacre of the Innocents.  
(*Scuola di San Rocco, Venice.*)

in his heart. Veronese takes possession of space, to incorporate it with the solid and material life which spreads out its setting before his dazzled eyes. But as there is no drama in him, as his vision of life is external and formal—the most highly colored, it is true, the most luminous, and the most magnificent that ever was



TINTORETTO. Narcissus. (*Colonna Gallery, Rome.*)

—he is not himself, he is under the spell of Tintoretto or Titian whenever he looks on dark seas, on tragic seas, or an atmosphere charged with lightning. For him the seas must be a dusty gray, in veiled emerald and sapphire, the skies of rose and so distant that one can see nothing like it except in the feathers on the neck of certain white birds; for him there must be the freedom of the broad sea where the wind blows the foam into a spray, and limitless space filled with vibrating particles of silver.

Doubtless, Veronese, who came from the mainland, had seen that cold silver even as Moretto, the painter of Brescia—and the instructor of Moroni, the studious observer of popular figures, of workmen at their labor, of merchants, and of learned men—had perceived it in



TINTORETTO. *The Milky Way.* (*National Gallery.*)

the air, on the glaciers of the Alps, and on the white clouds which passed over the lakes. But never, without Venice, would Veronese have warmed that silver with the rays of the sun made iridescent by watery vapor; never would he have caused it to penetrate into the material of robes, into the skin, into the hair of women, into the volume of the waters and the grain of the marbles; never would he have mixed it so constantly as if to give an appearance of airy transparen-

to the whole, to the torrents of colors that deluged his canvases, streaming in glittering sheets, and falling in cascades, to rebound and scatter in a mist of harmonies traversed by the light.

The gesture of his figures, correct and living, is a decorative expression. He interprets the movements of the surface of the mind such as one observes at a feast when men reveal to the eyes of others only so much of themselves as will enhance their importance in the world. And that is certainly not to say that Veronese is a worldly painter. Van Dyck has not yet come upon the scene to establish the painter of the world of fashion, the man who will first mislead painting and then dishonor it. The worldly painter is the slave of a *world*, whereas Veronese subjects *the world* to the sovereignty of a genius which moves between the almost undefinable limits of its own caprice and of its own judgment. To him luxury is an object, the same as are the trees, the flowers, the fruits, the sea, the sky, a nude woman. It is an object whose splendor, tonality, and power he also possesses, Veronese, who loves it for the prodigious spectacles that it affords him at every moment, as if it were the sudden and miraculous harvest of three centuries of adventure, of glory, and of effort. He is the poet of luxury, the greatest poet of luxury, the only great poet of luxury who without doubt existed. At least, I see no other, and for me he suffices.

Serious people, I know well, have declared him "superficial." That is their privilege. But I should like them to begin, at least, by penetrating to the complex and secret center of his period. It is true that one does not discover, in these figures which pass before him, a single deep sentiment that expresses itself in an inclination of the head, a glance, a hand extending itself or drawing



VERONESE. Allegory of Summer and Autumn, detail of a fresco.  
(*Villa Giacomelli. at Maser.*)

back, an embrace, a parting—all that is a permanent part of us, all that makes us strong and that makes us weak, that we hide with shame, that is sometimes humiliating and sometimes sublime, when we are aware that we are under surveillance. One watches the noblemen who pass by, one leans from balconies to see the procession of gondolas dragging red, black, or green velvet in their wake, one caresses the luxurious dogs, one converses while looking elsewhere, one fills the cups, one offers baskets of fruit, and one listens absent-mindedly, and never with the heart, to music that is played during magnificent feasts amid which the sound of glass and silver is heard. But the profundity of Veronese is not there. It is in his immeasurable power to combine his sensations with the expression which he imparts to them. If we are to understand by painting the art of organizing colors symphonically, there never was and there never will be a greater painter than this man whose very name, when it is pronounced, resembles the shimmer of pearls and of gold pieces. The world rises up before him like a sea of highly colored visions so multiple, so complex, and so interpenetrated that when they issue forth from him, it is like a universe in which we had perceived only paleness and murmuring, and whose voices burst forth suddenly in triumphal sonority. The colors do not live separately. One cannot determine them. They all enter one another to destroy and to recompose one another. And they are all analyzed to the last degree in order to construct the pictures of Veronese as if they were an immense prism in which Nature re-forms herself, quite unaided, in the interplay and interpenetration of the tones, the shades, the reflections, even as the light re-forms Nature every second of the day from sunrise to sunset.

That which remains, especially when one surveys those palaces with their high arcades, those bright forests of balconies and colonnades which Andrea Palladio opened upon space, when one sees those beautiful forms detaching their trembling outlines against the palpitation of the air, are the inclined profiles against the background of the sky, those great kneeling women, with dragging trains, the glory of their prostrate bodies, and those broad gestures, those obeisances, those noblemen with embroidered robes, those servitors, those musicians, that overpowering splendor which remains of the vision; it is the clear and well-defined memory of a mighty tumult, of an orchestra in which the dresses and the hangings, their reds, their greens, their oranges, their blacks, their pinks, their yellows, and the multi-colored flagstones, and the flowers and the fruits and the crystals spread upon the tablecloths, the skin like mother-of-pearl, the hair shot through with gold and amber, and the aërial harmonies all playing together and answering one another, abounding in rolling harmonies and scales which mount unceasingly and descend back and forth from one end of the keyboard to the other, sending forth in great waves the voices of the flesh, of the stuffs, of the marble, and of the sea, and making, as it were, a great sound of festival carried to us by the wind.

Veronese is the painter of the glory of Venice. He has celebrated her strength and her wealth and her dominion over the waters. He saw the clouds tremble in her forms and in her reflections. He unfurled her flags in the light. He mounted the terraces of the palaces of the Orient to see the procession of the Doges when they went forth to cast their wedding ring into the Adriatic. On his palette he ground all the pearls of the



sea that her victorious fleets gathered in. And in the train of those fleets he followed the curve of the globe and divined the aspect of the azure sails which cradle him in the ether.

In introducing the rays which traverse space, its coolness, its murmurs, its breezes, into poems of mythology,



VERONESE. The Daughters of Lot. (*Louvre.*)

in which the necessity for love is affirmed with a tranquil lyricism, he joined with a chain of gold and of leaves the spirit of antiquity with the new paganism which was to flower later on in the soul of Watteau. In this sumptuous and sensual Venetian, in the trees clothed in ivy and moss from which red flowers burst forth, in the subtle forms, nude or veiled with light purples which palpitate on the waves like rose petals, one recognizes the dawn of that illusive poetry which,

two centuries after him, was to sing the smiling and brave death of the old aristocracies.

## VII

This poetic divination is all the more admirable that the century which followed was quite silent in Venice, whereas the same century, through the men of the north of Europe, through Poussin, through Claude Lorrain, and through Rubens, was preparing Watteau. Even during the time of Veronese, with Bassano, whose wine-colored reds and opaque shadows now invade the darkening backgrounds, with Schiavone and his declamatory landscapes, and with the abundant trivialities of Palma Giovine, the artistic life of Venice sinks into vulgarity, as her sensual life is swallowed up in a low and weakening debauch. In the seventeenth century, and in the eighteenth especially, Venice is the gambling house and brothel of Europe, to which she no longer offers anything more than the elegance and the amusements of the carnival, in which the bizarre fantasy of Pietro Longhi, one of the last of her painters, and the verve of her musicians, Pergolese and Cimarosa, alone supply whatever elegance of spirit there is. After having lived by her work, she lived from her income—that is to say, from the work of others. No society, no civilization can endure that.

And so the Watteau of Venice is Tiepolo. A dancer of obeisances furnishes the hint for the great melancholy poet of evenings and of voluptuousness. He is the decorator, necessary to this world, which has substituted the pleasure of the rabble for the mighty exaltation of the senses. Amiable, witty, and conscienceless, he is the Casanova of painting, a worldly Jesuit brought forth by a rotting society. An adroit painter, certainly,

with marvelous skill in arranging boudoirs and ball-rooms, he scatters his tones and his forms with the ease of a lord who spends prodigally what does not belong to him; an ingenious, spontaneous, and free colorist, but overfacile and slight in his brilliance. The flesh of the Venetian women disappears under their rouge.



VERONESE. Allegorical Group, detail.  
(*National Gallery.*)

In the majesty of the space in which the great painters had dipped their brushes, he could find no more than a few pretty tones and shades, commonplace fundamentally and appearing as if they had been washed by the rain which had at the same time cleansed the verdigris and the gold of the palaces reflected in the canals. He lost his sense of atmosphere in hesitating for a while among the last painters of Venice, impressive painters who still seize, among the old, red-brown stones, the iridescent imprint of the air pierced by the light but



VERONESE. The Rape of Europa, detail.  
(*Ducal Palace, Venice.*)

to whom the city seems so old-fashioned and small that they appear to belong to another race than that of the masters of the past; they seem to be describing other places and speaking another language. Guardi can no longer perceive space save as something that quivers over the walls, or is pressed into the narrow frames of his little canvases, attenuated, and mingling only with the surface of things, which become precise and isolated and thin, like the pictures themselves with their sounds of festivity and the silence of the heart. Or they are muddy and confused, but perhaps all the more sensitive that they contain something of the moist earth, the mold, and are mottled by the phosphorescences fermenting in the waters. Canaletto sees space as something more vast, to be sure, and partaking more of the substance of the palaces, of the sky, and of the canals, but he seizes upon it jealously and caresses it and pampers it—one is tempted to say that he treats it as material for chamber music. He is no longer a maker of symphonies: he is a melodist of the air. Where Titian or Tintoretto, or more especially Veronese, handled five hundred instruments at once to magnify the immense harmony spread abroad from the vault powdered with stars to the pearl and coral treasury of the seas, he takes up his violoncello in which lie dormant sonorous tones, which he awakens discreetly, with a restrained, veiled accent, monotonous, and slightly poignant, like a secret lament and the tenderest of farewells. An almost uniform light, at once reddish and silver, lies peacefully upon his pictures, bathing them in its glow and seeming like the last sigh of an autumn upon which fall the ashes of stars of its last beautiful night. As with Guardi, there is nothing left but the water and the stones; as with Guardi the air grows thin before it

finally dies. Inversely, the same thing occurred among them as occurred among the primitives of Venice. The late painters regret losing the sense of space even as in the early men we get our presentiment of it. It was that which gave them the sweep, the certitude, and



CANALETTO. View of Venice. (*National Gallery.*)

the strength that are no longer found in this period of forgetfulness.

And it was, above all, through space that the glory of Venetian art had existed. By introducing air into painting, it had brought life into it and a continuity—no longer abstract, but active and visible—among the forms that are combined, the planes that recede, and among all the fragments of solid, liquid, or aërial matter which are determined one by the other and pass from one to the other by an infinitive number of transitions that, in his rôle, the great painter makes us feel without

unveiling their mystery. Through her sense of space, Venice is a single block in extent as she is in time, bringing about a momentary communion between the ancient spirit and the modern spirit, between the Moslem world and the Christian world, between Asiatic indifference and Occidental optimism.

For Venice is indifferent. She accepts indiscriminately all the materials which the tide of the world brings within reach of her senses. And Venice is idealistic, because she groups these materials into new organizations, because she is forever generalizing. Her imagination is not given to inventing, but to combining images, and to revealing to us the real by describing it to us shorn of all the accidents and the details which mask its meaning for us; and it is through her imagination that Venice remains Italian and enacts, in the Passion Play of Renaissance Italy, the last act of the poem. To Italy the life of passion revealed a world close to her inner truth. She passed from one form to another to realize, in an effort of synthetic harmony, her need for a standard form in which her desire should recognize itself.

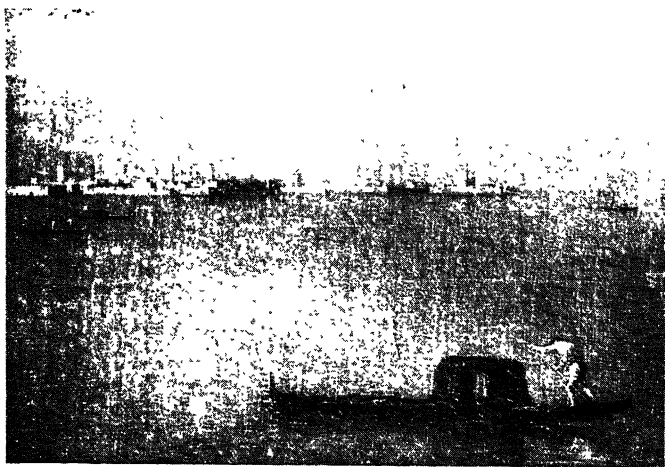
So, in her ensemble, Italy, where, during the Middle Ages, the social bond existed only as an idealistic and passionate reaction, in the heart of a few, Francis of Assisi, Dante, and Giotto, Italy, in need of equilibrium at the time when that social bond which had escaped her was loosening everywhere else, sought the means of adapting the individual through his spirit and his senses to the social and natural surroundings which were being continually changed by the evolution of man. Through Florence and Rome and Venice, by means of the intellectual arabesque and the sensuous passage, Italy gave us that which our needs demanded.



TIEPOLO. The Chariot of Venus. (*Prado.*)



As her rise had been very rapid and the summits she reached had been very lofty, her fall seemed all the greater, and her silence, during three centuries, seemed all the more discouraging. Broken into ten fragments by the politics of the Church, she was unable to recreate for herself the moral life which would permit her to affirm anew her power of idealism in the face of the



GUARDI. View of Venice. (*Poldi Pezzoli Museum, Milan.*)

unified neighboring nations. But such a force does not die. It lives with a latent life as imperishable as the force introduced by Italy into the universe. The fragments have drawn together, the same blood flows through them and knits them together, all the members of the new body feel their solidarity and send back to the nerve centers the fluid which makes them move. The very conditions of modern life, reuniting hostile cities, permit Italy's individuality of passion to rest upon a wider area, that it may define itself once more.

The Italy of to-day presents the spectacle of a country in an irresistible ascent. Its renaissance is a material one, as were those of Florence and Venice at first. But we have no right to condemn the expressions of her inner life of to-day by the expressions of that inner life which formerly was hers. Art is a result, not a beginning. What will remake the Italian soul is not the professional of painting, of sculpture, of literature, or of music who is more lamentably abundant perhaps in modern Italy than in any other place. It is the crowd that passes by the works of the present without seeing them, even as it passes before the works of the past. It seems that Italy already desires, in a hesitating Europe, to play that rôle of the leaven that produces new forms out of a contempt for habit and for the moral rules laid down by weary peoples. The countryside is cultivated, the cities are powerfully active, children swarm everywhere, and obscure life indifferently brings forth its revolutionary pressure. The effort which it is making to live will once more teach this great people how bread and wine are made for our hunger and our thirst.





BRUGES

## Chapter IV. THE FRANCO-FLEMISH CYCLE

### I



THE true spirit of the Renaissance was introduced into the west and the north of Europe only by means of the wars of Italy. In France and in Flanders, the fifteenth century is Gothic; the individualizing of the forms of thought takes place unknown to the artists there. Architects, painters, sculptors, and workers in stained glass all retain the mediæval soul, dissociated and fragmentary, but perhaps intensified as well. It even seems that when we take the fifteenth century in a mass, in its ensemble, it corresponds better to the general and superficial idea of the Gothic which we make for ourselves than the centuries which preceded it. The communal spirit is conquered. The reign of the theologian begins again, but it is a theologian imprisoned by the letter of the law, and one in

whom the flame is extinguished. The people, crushed again under feudal power, and no longer having any hope, turn in the direction of artificial paradises. The magnificent equilibrium of the great cathedrals is entirely destroyed. The flame rises, crackling, twisting, and licking the vaults; it covers the bare skeleton which had defined for the minds of men the real meaning of the edifice, which inclines toward openwork in the stone and toward slightness, exhausting itself in vain leaps, becomes breathless, and involves itself in the complications of fine detail and of technical tricks. The sickly mysticism of unhappy men, fatigued by the efforts of their will and in despair because of their feeling that life was escaping from them, invaded all the forms of thought and of action. Man no longer believes in his strength; the miracle is everywhere: it explains everything, it answers everything, nothing is expected any longer save by grace of the miracle. The only miracle of that century, Joan of Arc, who represents the common sense of the people struggling against the stupidity of the clergy, the spirit of justice rebelling against the spirit of quibbling, the awakening of pure faith after its disfigurement by bigotry, is first regarded as a providential event through which man is saved the trouble of acting.

The abjectness of the people, before the coming of its great daughter, was only too easy to explain. Never had northern France known times so hard. At the end of the sixteenth century its population was reduced by two thirds. The peasant, having taken refuge in the woods or the quarry, abandoned the fields and the roads to the armed bands. Guides, brigands, and soldiers devastated the countryside and held the towns for ransom under the banner of France, of England, of



CLAUX SLUTER. *The Well of Moses*, detail. (*Dijon.*)

Burgundy, or of Armagnac. Cold and hunger killed more people than war did. Emptied by the plague, by famine, pillage, and taxes, the ruined cities were nothing more than camps, where all industry, all traffic, and all social life were arrested. The wolves wandered about Paris in broad daylight. The people ate what they



JEAN MICHEL and G. DE LA SONNETTE. The Holy Sepulcher, detail. (15th Century.) (*Hospital of Tonnerre.*)

could—nameless refuse, garbage, and even human flesh, dead or alive.

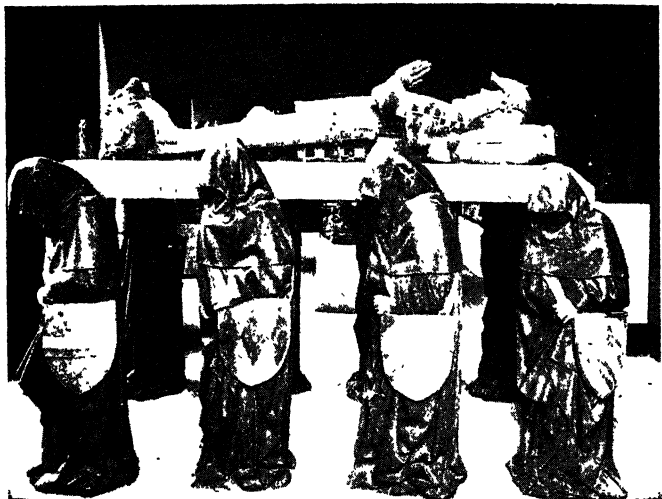
And so the moment was one of silence. The Ile de France, in the space of a hundred years, saw the erection of only one edifice, the Bastille, and that was a fortress. Even the enervated cathedrals grew only in those regions where, in place of hope, there were to be found vegetables, meat, bread, and money—in Rouen and in Normandy, which were held by the English.

The French, properly so called, now carved no more than tombs, and the inspiration which Gothic painting seemed to have taken for a moment under the Valois—the first known portrait in France is that of Jean le Bon by Girard d'Orléans—the inspiration of Gothic painting, a descendant of the stained-glass window, was killed. Wandering artists, it is true, followed the wandering monarchy; Jean Foucquet, the painter of Charles the Seventh, founded the School of the Loire and kept alive, in the face of English oppression and of Burgundian and Flemish wealth, the soul of the image makers of the Ile de France and of the tellers of the ancient tales and verse. But almost all of them went where they found action and a little security. The Gothic workmen turn in a semicircle which connects the low countries with the valley of the Rhône by way of Burgundy, that connects the Flemish cities with the people caught at Avignon by way of the ducal court of Dijon; they flee the occupied zone even as the statues and the paintings escape from the forgotten or perverted social architecture.

Flanders, which for four centuries had been such a focus of life, could not help being a focus of art at the same time. From the eleventh century onward, one hears of Bruges, of Ghent, and of Ypres, a great workshop of the dye industry and of weaving. A people of poor workmen, who were, however, grouped into strong guilds, fermented there and rose in a mass at the call of the bells in the steeples when there was need of defending, against the King of France, their municipal liberties, and even before these, the privileges and wealth of the merchants. What matter? The tide was rising. Bruges and Ghent, in the fourteenth century, were able to check Philip the Fair. And the deed was



accomplished with a tumult which revealed depths of life capable of overflowing and of engendering an irresistible moral activity when the hour at which it would be needed should come. And in this place also, art was



BURGUNDIAN SCHOOL. Tomb of Philippe Pot. (*Louvre.*)

born of the will to affirm a new force, looking toward men and away from death.

And indeed, here as everywhere else, the freeing of individual energies was to translate itself especially through the development of that plastic expression which best corresponded with them—painting. Flemish architecture of the new century, still ogival in technique and in appearance, is a manifestation of the middle classes—of the weavers and the brewers. It is very rich, but when analyzed it is feeble. There are too many statues on the complicated façades—statues of aldermen, of merchants, and of soldiers, a perfect orgy of official

effigies stretching out everywhere in line above line, and nowhere opening the leaded panes of the windows to announce the Renaissance. The upright parallel lines enriched with gold from top to bottom and the open-work of the belfries through which the bells sent down their peal form a chiseled shrine which has an appearance of pettiness because it is set in too narrow a space, because of the lines which stretch out and ascend but which are broken at every moment, and because the glitter of the glass and the metals is interrupted and reflected a thousand times. Every time that architecture gains in height and loses in breadth, when the empty spaces are increased and the full portions are slighted, when, in order to obtain effects, it forgets what bound it to the soil, when it forgets its function and its origin, it is on the point of surrendering the rôle that art possesses among us and of effacing itself in favor of other forms of activity. As it has to abandon the search for a plastic expression of a lofty and collective character, something between the mediæval palace of Siena or of Perugia and the individual plastic expression through which Michael Angelo announces a new intellectual order, it has to abandon the hope of discovering in Flanders, between the markets of Ypres and the work of Rubens, a monument in which all the elements of the century shall march on with the exaltation that comes of strength and of harmony. But in Flanders, in the fifteenth century, the social symphony is not completely broken up, and if the movement of dissociation which is to reveal its painters to it is accentuated little by little, the new man will not assert himself until a hundred years after the time when he had appeared in Italy.

Moreover, the Flemish city is submissive. An ally



H. VAN EYCK. Adam and Eve.  
(*Museum of Brussels.*)

of English commerce, it cannot reject the union, at first purely nominal, with the richest of the French provinces (which itself draws support from England), and yet refuse to associate itself with the ruin of the French monarchy whose many assaults it had to withstand in the hundred years preceding. Burgundy is, like the Flemish city, a very ancient center of activity. Before the appearance of the ogive, it was the chief focus of the Romanesque school of the North. French architecture in Burgundy took on a character of abundance, of luxury, and of materialism far removed from the ideal of Champagne, of Paris, or

of Picardy, and when the sculpture of the tombs was developed there, as in France, it was with quite a different accent. These are no longer the pure, fine, grave effigies which stretch out in the almost impenetrable shadow of the dark vaults of the churches; they are made for chapels whose light is warm with the rays of stained glass and candles; the blue giants lie on their black marble and are wept over by angels, the monks are well dressed, well fed, and have comfortable incomes; and sometimes, as in the tomb of Philippe Pot, there is a funereal sumptuousness in the strength of the fallen warrior, in the drapery of the black mourners whose faces are hidden, and in the depths of the reds and the golds that glow warmly in the darkness. When the dukes of Burgundy arrive at Dijon, the movement of economic and intellectual exchange between the Flemish provinces and the Burgundian provinces has become more active because of the profound affinities existing between the temperaments of the two peoples. There is the same luxuriance of life—denser perhaps in Flanders, where the atmosphere is heavy with water, where industrial life is concentrated in the cities and revolves about the trades. The people wrap themselves in its wool and in cloth; its drink is a heavy beer. Life is more eloquent and ostentatious in Burgundy, where the closely woven carpet of the grape vines extends from Beaune to Dijon over the dark gold of the hillside, where the breast drinks in more of the air and sunlight in the vineyards, where the red wine inflames the faces and floods the blood with warmth. The popular festivals of the Flemings, the great heavy festivals where there is so much eating and drinking, show the nature of the pleasures peculiar to the people. At the court of Dijon,



JAN VAN EYCK. Canon van de Paele, detail. (*Museum of Bruges.*)

the men and women, dressed in velvet, in brocade, and cloth of gold, on the brutal feast-days, express their taste in their heaps of food, their display of coarse love making, their picnics, drinking bouts, jousts, tournaments, and cavalcades over roads strewn with flowers, their fountains pouring forth mead and beer, and the setting they give themselves: cloths worked with es-cutcheons, velvet cloaks, silken standards, and brilliant tapestries.

As a matter of fact, with the merchant-drapers and their dyed cloths, artists soon arrived from the Low Countries at the court of Dijon. There came Melchior



POL DE LIMBOURG. February, miniature from *Les Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*. (*Chantilly*.)

Broederlam, a painter of gilded altar pieces, candid, but already drunk with color, like every good Fleming from Flanders. There came Claux Sluter, a good theologian and a great sculptor, whose vigorous influence was to make itself felt in all France and Germany, because he wrenched form from the wall of the cathedral and from the slab of the tomb and because he pushed onward in a movement of such rude and broad eloquence that Donatello and Michael Angelo themselves are shaken by it later. He was, however, the only man of the

North, at that moment, who was worthy of the victory, through his strength as an individual and through the decision with which he characterized, by an expressive figure, some essential and simple moral idea. The others took from the tapestry weavers, from the goldsmiths, and from the innumerable miniaturists who frequented the court of the Duke, more than they gave to them. The Valois confirmed the tradition of their family. Like Philip the Bold himself, his brothers surrounded themselves with artists. Jean Bandol came from Bruges at the call of Charles the Fifth. The *Book of Hours* of the Duc de Berry, a great collector of illuminations, had been covered with admirable little pictures by Pol de Limbourg, the first among the Flemings to feel his fraternity with the soil that we dig, with the air that penetrates us, and with the animals that work for us; the first to seize the poetry that is forever in all our gestures and in all objects, and of the murmur of summer, and of the silence of the snow—the first to foresee that Breughel was to come.

In the northwest of Europe, where the walls of the cathedrals, invaded by the great windows, did not, as in Italy, permit the development of the fresco, painting came forth from the very heart of the great Gothic body through the illuminated manuscript. Since the sixth century in Ireland, the seventh in England, the eighth and ninth in France, from the Loire to the Rhine, where antique and Byzantine influences had entered with Roman architecture, sacred books, missals, psalters, and Gospels had begun, very timidly and discreetly at first, to be covered with figures in flat tints, awkward, stiff, rendered anæmic by monastic rules whose rigor was even to be accentuated by the Benedictines of the tenth century. When the school of Paris arrived, at the hour

when all the territory watered by the Seine was being covered with ogives and with towers, the flood of light that invaded the nave of the cathedrals illuminated the sacred texts.

Then an immense song of joy bursts forth. The monks are no more able to retain the monopoly of painting than that of the sculptured image or of the art of building. The laymen seize upon books which, even when they are sacred works, live wholly because of their images. Formerly, the images had hardly dared to decorate the capital letters, to call attention to the text for purposes of meditation. Now they take possession of entire pages and



POL DE LIMBOURG. December, miniature from *Les Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*. (*Chantilly*).

every day they drive back the margin which they will end by suppressing. The old background of uniform gold does not always disappear—the blues, the blacks, the reds, and the greens sing against it with so much force!—but the illuminator reserves the right to make use of it according to his will. It lights up with his cheerfulness. Patient because he is happy, he sometimes spends his whole lifetime in mak-



ing the indestructible parchment flower with his idle gossip. When one opens those heavy volumes which from the outside seem so tiresome, there is an eruption of hymns to the light and of sudden apparitions of gardens and skies. One must look very closely to discover the gentle Christian mythology hidden under the



The Unicorn Tapestry. (*Cluny Museum.*)

downpour of rays of light, like a pale flower in the fire of summer. Everything is a pretext for putting fire into the dull pages, the sea, the woods, blood, wine, the plumes in the wings of angels, the robes of male saints, the eyes of female saints, their hair, their aureoles, the open gates of heaven. In the fourteenth century, after Flanders has grafted upon the malicious and frank observation of the French illuminators, her love for real landscape and for the real human face, both scrutinized in their smallest and their heaviest details, we have



JAN VAN EYCK. Flemish Merchant and his Wife. (*National Gallery.*)

nearly reached the synthesis from which the painting of the northwest of Europe will come forth. The illumination has invaded the page, and it stifles there; it lacks air, although into its too-limited space a great draught of air has entered, although the landscape has distance and the planes separate from the rich chaos of the colors, although the men's relation-ship with the deep



ROGIER, VAN DER WEYDEN. The Descent from the Cross.  
(*Escorial.*)

universe is already more than suspected. It is a picture, and if it is to last, it is all the more necessary that it escape from the book, because the printing press is coming to transform the book, to dethrone it from its rank as an almost inaccessible idol, and to enthrone it in the popular realm of endless diffusion and circulation.

## II

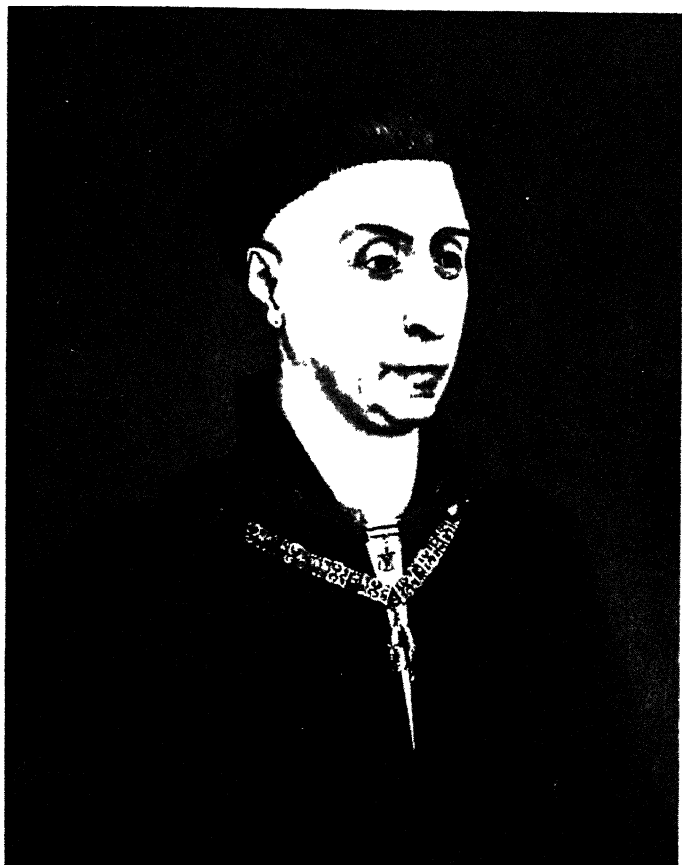
But it was not the printing press that freed painting. It had emerged from the book before Gutenberg's inven-



ROGER VAN DER WEYDEN. *The Descent from the Cross*,  
detail. (*Escorial*.)

tion had disseminated books beyond the limit of universities and of convents. The two movements had the same source, and they responded to the same need. Since the people no longer built markets and churches, it was necessary that the soul of the markets and the churches should express itself in books and thus fructify the souls who were to realize its hope. The van Eycks were expected. One is not astonished to find them so sure of themselves, having almost nothing of the primitive about them, and as they would be if they felt behind them a tradition already ancient. Indeed, they were the flowering of Gothic art, whose expression in color had ripened little by little in the pages of the missals.

It was necessary for oil painting to be popularized by those whose mission it was to open those pages and to spread over the multitude the golden fleece which it had gained with so much difficulty. It was by this means that they were able to incorporate with their paint the limpidity, the transparence, the deep and gentle brilliance of the light of the North, the light of clouded skies, of plowed fields with their glow, and of moist forests, the light that does not go out, however pale the sun. The "Pascal Lamb" of van Eyck celebrates at Ghent the triumph of the light almost exactly at the moment when the "Baptism" of Masaccio expresses the ideal of form which appears to him and which is the despair of the Florentines. The robust faith of the Flemings preserved their sensuality from the disquietude of the Italians. They remained men of the Middle Ages, with sound hearts and eyes as full of light as the glass of a cathedral window; it was quite unconsciously, without suffering and without haste, that they led northern Europe into unknown paths.



ROGER VAN DER WEYDEN. Portrait of Philip the Good.  
(*Antwerp Museum.*)

The van Eycks, who came from the Meuse and thus join Flanders and France to the Gothic Rhineland and to the school of Cologne, did not perceive, any more than did the men of the thirteenth century, any antagonism between the paradise of the senses and the paradise of the inner life. In no way did they stand apart from the merchants of Bruges and from the manufacturers of Ghent. They were worthy men, loving their work, robust in their honesty, and their minds were troubled very little. In covering their canvas they were as conscientious as good weavers, good drapers, and, I was about to say, good dyers. Paradise, for them, was a thing of regular prayer, of faithful attendance at church services, of listening to the priest and respecting him excepting in matters of business, and of painting, of accepting life simply provided it had a good surrounding of dyed cloths and of carved wood, with money in the strong-box, beer in the cellar, and an abundance of linen in the wardrobes. It was also a matter of journeys from city to city, on heavily built horses that walked or trotted and whose pace and docility gave one a chance to fill one's lungs with the odor of the meadows covered with daisies, to ride past the bushes covered with flowers, to delight one's eyes with the colorful sights of green and blue expanses where all the greens and all the blues mingle with each other and follow each other, where all the plowed lands and all the trees and all the horizons together implant in the mind imperishable harmonies which tell us clearly of the bounty of the harvests, of the depth of the soil, and of the weight of the clouds that cross the broad sky. And all this is necessary, because when a bad season comes, when the roads are broken down, when the water that has overflowed from the ditches

has drowned out the fields, one can then bring into the big rooms behind the colored glass of the windows a little of the broad splendor of these landscapes; one can break up the box of jewels that nature has furnished us and of it make dyes for furred robes; one can carve furniture decked out with lace made from the wood; and with the money earned by the sale of wool and skins, jewelry of a somewhat barbarous type is bought. In the rich gloom of the household the carpets dull all sounds. Intimacy and sumptuousness are obtained by dark oak, by the tapestry hangings, dull or resplendent, quite often even when only half seen in the weak light; they bring silent crowds into the room with their extreme and heavy richness, they afford depths of peace and comfort into which bad weather can no more enter than the echo of the unhappiness of the poor. In this unbroken luxury, deep red, gold, and blue predominate. But the reds of the robes and the carpets and the tiles are repeated in the glow of the coppers, the glow of the coppers also wanders over the dull mirrors, and



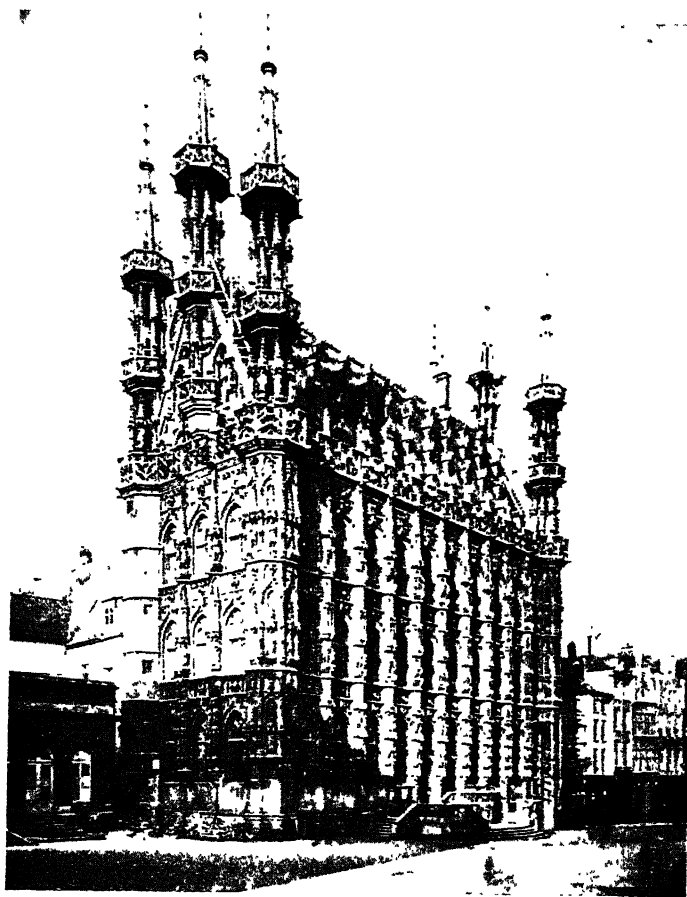
PETRUS CRISTUS. Young Girl.  
(Berlin Museum.)



so all things respond one to another—the gold and the copper, the reds and the blues—and a meticulous and heavy harmony reigns; it has a quality like that of enamels and of sparkling precious stones.

In this land of Flanders which lived from the manufacture and commerce of dyed cloths, where laces, velvets, and textiles were piled up in the houses of the citizens, where tapestries were hung from all the windows when the ducal processions passed in all the prodigality of their material pomp, it was impossible that the eyes of the painters should not be attracted continually by all these violent, heavy, and full harmonies. When they entered the rooms of the houses, it was as if they were looking into great open chests in which were heaped up, more or less at random, the most magnificent products of the textile industry, forming confused but perfect symphonies because of the splendor of the materials and the relationship among the tones. Of the men and the women who were there, one saw nothing but the hands and the faces, their bodies being covered by thick robes, their heads by dark hoods or by ample white head-dresses that hid the hair, the foreheads, and the necks. The volumes of the bodies and the harmony of the lines were concealed under the folds, the hands and the faces shone forth from the semidarkness and alone detained the eye of the artist with the strongly colored spots which served as a jewel casket. And the picture was composed spontaneously, in a massive block which lodged itself intact in the memory, leaving them neither the desire nor the leisure to choose or to eliminate.

This is what places the Flemings, the van Eycks in particular, as the first among all the painters who have respected the complete aspect of men, adding nothing



Hotel de Ville of Louvain.

thereto save their power of penetration. They pursued resemblances with tenacity, the exact material resemblance, even to the direction, the form, and the disposition of the wrinkles, the number of the hairs and the grain of the skin, and it is this material resemblance which, through its exactitude, carries with it the moral resemblance of the individual whose needs and functions have little by little modeled the face. There are faces of merchants, eager and honest; there are faces of women resigned to their task and almost always represented as heavy with the burden of the new life. Often there are great, ugly faces with long noses, broad mouths, bony jaws, and the skin tightly drawn over the skeleton of the face or loose and falling in thick folds. They are heavy with their strength and their calmness, dense, full, material, and so nakedly truthful that one might think them carved out of the mass of the muscles, the nerves, the blood, and the bones. There is never any generalization, but also there is never a lie. Each of these beings is the one who came to seek the painter; each one is intent on living that moment of his life at which the painter found him, without a thought of the past or a thought of the future. But there are so many of these faces, donors and their wives, and nuns with clasped hands, aldermen, magistrates, and members of guilds, that finally the average type is born of the composite that forms in our memories, like the average type of the faces carved in stone by the image maker of Champagne or Picardy. It is a continuation of the Middle Ages; there is the same process of patient accumulation, wherein every element, seen close by, retains its characteristics, and wherein the ensemble, seen from a distance, forms a compact and solid whole, which it is impossible to disintegrate. Besides, their common

interests gave to the artists of Flanders a common moral life. They continue to belong to the corporations of the Middle Ages. When the van Eycks arrived at Ghent, a guild of painters had been in existence there for a long time which had no other duties or privileges than those of the guilds of the weavers, the blacksmiths, the dyers, or the brewers.

### III

At that moment, and with men so sure of themselves, it was impossible that the influence of the individualistic painting of the South which, in the course of the same century, made itself so strongly felt at Avignon, should enter Flanders. One does not find it with the van Eycks, nor with Petrus Cristus, nor with Bouts, nor with van der Goes, or van Outwater or their pupils. However, even if we do not take into account the influence that Italy and northern Europe have for a long time been exercising upon each other by means of the architects and through the exchanges of manuscripts, we may be certain that, from the end of the fourteenth century, the painters of the North knew Giotto and his school, and that from the beginning of the fifteenth century the Italians saw the rising of the sun of the North. But if Italy never asked of Flanders other lessons than those of technique (although it gave a great welcome to the Flemish artists and bought their pictures), it took a century of material and moral impoverishment before Flanders would listen to Italy, and it was not until Antwerp had risen anew that Italy could give to Flanders her strong nourishment, instead of seeing her reject the gift from the South.

Roger van der Weyden remained a Fleming quite as much as the van Eycks, but in a different way. A

hundred years before the Romanizing of this country and far better than they did—because he possessed the freedom that gives self-confidence—he had perceived what it is that gives Italian painting its power of revelation, its educative and expansive force, and its radiance. He had followed the continuous line that the hand of Giotto traced upon the walls to lead those who



DIERCK BOUTS. Abraham and Melchisedec, detail.  
(*Alte Pinakothek, Munich.*)

should come after him. The prophetic genius of the Tuscans finds in him its echo, a little dull and as if muffled by the mysticism of the North, but with an accent that is perhaps more human. He has an instinct for powerful harmonies, for opaque splendor, and for insistence upon color, but it is to dramatize life that he gives wings of fire to his angels, and spreads his winelike violet tones over the gradations of the blue in his skies. The power which his race has given him to distinguish types, to give to bodies the thinness and the deformations resulting from misery, to express grief in faces by the violent play of their muscles, he employs

to open the gates of hell. He uses a heavy arabesque, heavy because he drags a weight of real limbs and real bones, full of blood and of marrow, and instead of achieving the effect of bringing out the abstract mean-



HUGO VAN DER GOES. Saints Magdalen and Margaret, detail.  
(*Florence, S. Maria Nuova.*)

ing of the forms, his arabesque serves him as a means of causing them to take on the same dramatic movement as that of his compact material and his gleaming color; again it is his arabesque that permits him to show the weight of corpses held up by taut arms, to permit us to observe the presence of shoulders and breasts under the thickness of clothing, to accentuate the despair of bowed heads under their white head-

dresses, and to twist necks and hands. Everything hangs heavily and sinks down: knees bend, foreheads are bowed, and only the firm drawing sustains this despair amid the magnificence of life, like a profound hymn that falls and rises to console the vanquished. But there are broken accents in the voice. It is that of a mystic. Something new has passed over Flanders,



MEMLING. The Crucifixion, detail. (*Lübeck Museum.*)

has troubled its luxurious peace, has upset the egoism of its merchants, has broken open their overfilled strong-boxes, and has opened to the winds the rooms of their houses which they had kept too carefully closed. The figures, which formerly knelt or sat on carpets, amid the carved woodwork or the dyed hangings, now walk or fall upon the ground in the paved churches; they are framed by the complicated flowering of the last Christian architecture, and bell towers and pinnacles invade the canvas to offer their lacework for its background, while the stained-glass windows shower it with their rays.

In Flanders and in France the same mystic ardor arises from the manuscripts at the same moment. Processions bearing caskets of gold unroll through the hollow of the streets, golden archangels hover over the openwork of the city with its sharp gables, its slender belfries, its aërial lacework, arrows darting azure and sunshine through the narrow windows of the churches and the houses. Every nerve in the artist's body vibrates with the vibration of the bells and is made tense by hunger, by prayer, by dreams, and by despair. Nothing can express that last



MEMLING. Barbara de Vlanderbergh.  
(Brussels Museum.)

gleam cast by the illuminated manuscript at the moment when it enters upon its death struggle. One might say that all the sensual tumult of the beginning of Franco-Flemish painting, all the mystic fire of its ending, had been concentrated upon the page, to leap forth from it in their bugle blast of gold and of fire. It flames like a stained-glass window. The fire of hell and the burning bush give an added red and more somber reflections to the flame of the hot twilights and to the acrid smoke





MEMLING. The Entombment, detail. (*Lübeck Museum.*)

that rises from the war in France and from the insurrections in Flanders that were stamped out in blood.

It is because Flanders is suffering in its turn. Without being reduced to the misery of the provinces of northern France, still healthy, active, and very much alive, it begins to feel the weight of the gauntlet of the Burgundian. All its gold goes to pay for ducal feasts and for the war in France, while England weighs more and more heavily upon the manufacture of Ghent and the commerce of Bruges. Furthermore, Bruges and Ghent are quarreling, Ghent aids the duke to repress the insurrection of Bruges, and the duke has the support of Bruges in stifling the revolt of Ghent. It is the beginning of the systematic and bloody exploitation of the Low Countries and of the Walloon country. Liège and Dinand will have their turn before the coming of Spain, the terrible war of the "Beggars," before the time of the stake and the massacres when four generations were ground to earth and the great edifice of their ancestors was brought to ruin and devastation.

Bruges is dying. From the end of the fifteenth century onward, her port is filled up with sand. The last of the van Eycks could witness the defeat of her attempt at liberation. Roger van der Weyden works at Brussels when he is not in Italy. Simon Marmion, the miniaturist from Amiens, lives at Ghent; at the court of Philip the Good, Dirk Bouts is at Bruges, to be sure, but he comes there from Holland; Hugo van der Goes is a Ghent man; while Memling, like the van Eycks, is from the Rhine provinces. One would say that the illustrious city no longer attracts the painters through the splendor of her feasts and the power of her activity, but that they yield, when they come to live there, to that kind of sickly dilettantism which



JEROME BOSCH. Triptych, detail. (*Escorial.*)

seizes upon artists at moments of social discouragement and causes them to emigrate in troops toward the beautiful things that are disappearing. It is true that they still find the things with which to fill their eager eyes: the richness of tone which the red, yellow, and green façades take on in the rain-washed atmosphere, the vivacity, the stability, and the depth of the spots which they outline against the sky and with which they tremble in the water; and they find also the royal mantle of the cultivated land that one sees stretching out across the plain as one stands at the top of the bell tower. And it suffices them to go from Bruges to Ghent to witness the feasts, more sumptuous than ever, that are given there by Philip the Good—Burgundian courts of love, processions, banquets, tournaments, and chapters of the Golden Fleece. Hugo van der Goes receives them there. He is a powerful painter, too pensive and tender not to know what drama is, too strongly sensual also to forget the pomp and magnificence of the time, the savor of the soil, and the diffused light with which space is filled. The deep, moist earth, the dark splendor of the foliage; and, over this confused world whose life arises everywhere, in dew, in sap, in vapor, and in forces of fecundation, the meditative gravity of the faces and the weight of maternity prove that under the froth great depths of water are sleeping. But Bruges is dying, and Flanders is suffering. The feasts are external things, and among the reds and blacks which with their heavy rich notes dominate the flutter of the mantles, banners, and draperies, the eye can now see scarcely more than the colors of blood and of mourning.

The mysterious underside of Flemish life, which had been hidden by the brutal orgies of the lords and by the pomp of the merchants, mounts to the surface of

their soul. The secret and miserable Flanders of the nuns and of the poor people has its day. The artists have witnessed "the apparition of the mystic working-man, of the illumined Lollard, and of the visionary weaver, who had escaped from the cellars, terrified at the daylight, pale and wan and as if drunk with fasting."<sup>1</sup> One sees it in the pictures of Dirk Bouts, full of ascetic figures, sick and violent, people stretched out with their heads cut off and their blood flowing; full of beloved martyrs, sad and gentle; and of executioners with hideous faces, as one finds also in the manuscripts of the time and in the sickly painting of Jean Malouel, who came from the Low Countries to instal himself in Paris—miserable and ruined through the Anglo-French war. Hatred is dominant in him together with the bitter regret that he can not flee the social hell so as to take refuge in the country which he adores like a good Hollander, painting its meadows which are crossed by woods and by brooks, its hilly distances garnished with pasture land, that rich countryside whose depths are covered with bluish vapors and where the steeples and towers are piled up in the crenellated cities.

Memling, on the contrary, resigns himself; his love is stronger than his resentment, as the inner refuge of the convent is stronger than the furious excitement of the famished weaver. It is the death-struggle of Bruges. With his mystic sweetness he has walked along the canals which are falling asleep, he has watched under their waters the flight of the pale clouds, his eye has followed the wandering flotillas of leaves which the wind scatters over their surface, he has seen the flowering of the glycins which fall from the walls to drop lightly in the water, he has taken long rambles in the

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<sup>1</sup> Michelet, *Histoire de France*.

courts of the convents where the plane trees are becoming bare, where, behind the glitter of the thousand window panes of the façades, life is being extinguished



GERARD DAVID. The Punishment of the Wicked Judge.  
(Bruges Museum.)

and muffled with silence so that, through the egoism of peace, it may atone for its orgy of materialism, of color, and of tumult which had been going on for so many years outside. His principal work is destined for the

hospital, and perhaps, more than the real Flemish landscapes, where one gazes far out into the open air, walking over fat lands all surrounded by sky, he loves the fine, precious landscapes in which shimmer the limpid pinks and the blues of the jewelers. One would say that he rarely comes forth from his inner life, that he rarely sees the world save through the glass of his windows, thereby giving his crowds the appearance of being far away and his landscapes the appearance of being precious, veiled, and spiritual. He does not himself experience the misfortunes of the world, but rather he finds the trace of all of them in the attitudes of the kneeling men and women whom he poses symmetrically; he finds that trace on their faces which he scrutinizes slowly, noting how the suffering of several generations has accumulated in the countenances of men who have grown thin and anæmic and in the pale, sad, and gentle faces of the women, sometimes showing sorrow in the long lines, still further drawn out by the nun's headdress over their foreheads and temples. Where are the strong effigies of Jan van Eyck, full, sanguine, and well-fed? Where is Jan van Eyck himself, so sure of himself—he of the heavy substance, of the solid mind? Memling is a very careful, somewhat discreet and timid man, infinitely patient and attentive, infinitely an artist, sick, doubtless, with a tender and cloistered mysticism, a lover of silence and of engravings, of old books, of violins, and of poetry, a man who welcomes the humble, who is humble himself and very good. If his martyrs are pitiful, his executioners are less repulsive than those of the others; character loses its force through being too minutely searched out, and dramatic action is somewhat veiled through his delicate examination of detail and his meticulous harmonies.

They are pure, however, and sometimes brilliant, with a liquid and limpid glow which makes the reds and the blacks comparable with those of the Japanese lacquerers, and to be found outside of Flanders, during this century and the next, among the Germans, in Italy among the Sienese, and, unexpectedly enough, with Raphael;



PATINIR. The Flight into Egypt, detail. (*Prado.*)

one also finds them in France with Jean Malouel and among several of the anonymous little painters who precede and accompany the Clouets. These are not the only relationships between this century and Japan, and, what is more singular, with the Japan of the same period. At every moment, in the Sienese paintings of the fifteenth century, one finds elongated faces with oblique eyes which, one would say, were drawn by a painter of Nippon. Pisanello and, later, Dürer understand plants and animals in quite the Japanese manner,



and certain little Flemish portraits by Memling, Petrus Cristus, and Hugo van der Goes, like those of the dukes of Burgundy, dressed in black with the Golden Fleece about their neck, clean-shaven, pale, and broad faces of dominating and sensual men, make one think of the art of their contemporaries of the most distant Orient, because of the purity of the harmonies, the sober oppositions, and the decision of the outline. Is it by chance? Perhaps not. The Portuguese had already brought to the ports of Europe lacquered boxes and platters and perhaps even paintings by Meitcho, Shiubun, or Sesshiu.

## IV

This purity, this transparence of tone, this inviolate magnificence emanating from the material itself, so hard and condensed that it seems, like a black diamond, to radiate its own light, are to characterize the last school of Bruges. One finds them, even, with Patinir, perhaps the most moving and most profound lyricist of landscape, the powerful and concrete narrative of the labors of the countryside, the ancestor of Peter Breughel. But Patinir stands alone under his skies laden with clouds, in his rich and heavy plains where the forests and the harvest lands alternate and succeed each other to the horizon and beyond it. The painter is no longer living the life of his time, and when he looks upon it he is trying to find subjects through which to render the precious harmonies that have grown rigid in his mind. They are losing their strength and life just as everything else is. Gerard David, the pupil of Memling, no longer sees anything in the world save materials having the purity of gems and tones as deep as water. The faces, it is true, as with all the Flemings of that time, bear the stigmata of the age, of the privations, of

the physical pain, and of its cares, and he makes an honest attempt to make us perceive them. But before all else, he is a painter. He has no longer the heart of van Eyck, and more than a century is lacking before he can have the mind of Rubens. He paints cloths and wood and steel with as much attention and conscientiousness as he does hands and faces, and when he depicts a torture, that which he finds in the tone of the skinless flesh and of the knife that drips with blood is above all a pretext for recalling the red in which the executioners are dressed. He is a master of harmonies as pitiless as the official who cuts open the skin of the tortured man.

Gerard David has no compunction about taking possession of the secrets of his irreproachable harmonies and of his faultless material. One sees clearly that he is the last of his line. He is accustomed to the spectacle which brought hatred and tears to the successors of van Eyck or from which they fled with averted eyes. There, as elsewhere, the fifteenth century had opened veins and torn hearts. In Italy, there was the frightful contrast between intelligence in the ascendant and activity on the decline; in France chronic war, and in Flanders the convulsive death struggle of liberty. But here and there the suffering is not the same. The evil times have provoked the grief of van der Weyden, the wrath of Dirk Bouts, the sadness of Memling, and the misery of Malouel. The torment of Masaccio, of Donatello, and of Botticelli is the result of the effort they make to tear their soul from an exhausted ideal and to recreate the universe. In the former case it is wholly a moral drama that we see; in the latter, a wholly intellectual one. The Flemings suffer because they can no longer live fully, the Italians suffer because they do not know; and when they have learned through their suffer-

ing, they suffer again that they may know more, because that which dominates them is the desire for absolute forms and the imagination with which to realize them.

Hence the difference between the two parallel movements which cause the Occident to pass from a collective form of civilization to an individual form of



QUENTIN MATSYS. *The Entombment.* (*Antwerp Museum.*)

investigation. In Italy, men are led on by passion, they go ahead because they feel the need to; in Flanders, they go ahead in spite of themselves, their old garments please them, and it was because painting permitted them to take possession of intimate and real landscape, one whose especial destination was no longer, as in Florence, that of expressing abstraction, that, unknown to themselves, they play a positive and necessary rôle

in the conquest of the future. It was doubtless because their social life was disorganized, because they were unhappy and bowed down by an overwhelming moral depression that they were paving the way for a generation which was to be incapable of resisting Italian intellectualism, so consoling in its mirages, but so fatal



B. VAN BLEY. Maximilian hunting, detail of a tapestry. (*Lowre.*)

to those who have not, through great struggle, gained the right to understand it and to assimilate it.

Following the French invasion of the peninsula, the slender rampart which the school of Avignon set up against the moral conquest of France by Italy was carried away. According to the law, the vanquished took his revenge. Across France, which had been dragged into the path of Italian culture, debilitated Flanders felt the shock. The painters had deserted Bruges for Antwerp, where, especially after the acces-



ANTONIO MORO. The Duke of Alba. (*Brussels Museum.*)

sion of Charles the Fifth, the heir to the Low Countries through the marriage of his grandfather, all the activity of the Flemish cities was concentrated; and now all these artists yielded to the attractions of the southern genius. Resistance was difficult. Following the example of Francis the First and Charles the Fifth, all the powerful men of western Europe affirmed their preference for the painters from beyond the Alps, and, at the beginning of the century, the great symphonic school of painting had been born in Rome and in Venice; it made the Gothic ideal seem rather clumsy, very much reduced in its strength and in its necessity, to minds which, in the North as well as in the South, felt the demand of the time for the freeing of the individual.

It was to flee from mediæval impersonality that Jan van Mabuse and van Orley, and Coninxloo, Coxcie, van Hemessen, Martin de Vos, and Jan Mostaert abase their personality before that of the Italians. It made no difference that van Orley followed Rome and Florence and that Martin de Vos invoked the authority of the Venetians, the result was the same—anecdotes too highly dramatized, nudities too ideal, and mythologies too ponderous. If Jan van Mabuse had not sometimes let his eyes rest on the clean-shaven and strong faces of the princes and the merchants, if van Orley, a maker of sumptuous tapestries, had not retained in his puffed-up forms some trace of the dramatic sentiment with which Roger van der Weyden had inspired the beginning of the great painting of Flanders, and if, above all, Rubens had not in his youth had his mind haunted by the clumsy poems of a crowd of artists who talked of nothing but Italy and who advised the young men to go and study the masters there before taking a brush in their hands, we should have forgotten all those who

turned toward Rome. Not one of them was able to turn toward Antwerp, its great port and its luxuriant life nor, above all, to observe in himself the rise of the pride in life which the contact with such a focus of activity might have and should have brought about.



PETER BREUGHEL. Children's games. (*Imperial Gallery, Vienna.*)

Perhaps it was because Quentin Matsys was born in Antwerp, because he had always lived there, and because he laid down his brush only to go back to his blacksmith's hammer again, that he was the only one to catch a glimpse of the new sources which the growing life of Antwerp was about to open. At the rooms of the guild, to be sure, there was talk about Italy, and the pictures which his comrades showed to one another, the great rosy nuditities in the sacred landscapes where the gods lead their herds down the slopes to the meadows, increased the temptation that beset him to fall in line with fashion and to abandon the new forces which,

as a man of the people, he was obliged to respect. But he was beginning to understand the lesson of the Latin artists, and to some extent he mastered the urge of an instinct which was recreating itself little by little. He has less empty spaces in his works than have the great Flemish primitives, the organization of his pictures is less confused, and sometimes one finds in them—as in the “Entombment”—a well-defined and well-sustained effort toward the continuity of lines and the balance of volumes which must be the passage between the great dramatic sentiment of Roger van der Weyden and the formidable arabesque into whose tumult—as abundant as the seasons and as well organized as their rhythm—Rubens will bring in all the forms of life. No matter, he is more a Fleming than the others—direct, compact, and with flashes of a strange charm in his landscapes that vanish in transparent distances. As he was a worker in iron, his material is a trifle hard and dry; as he had not had the time to look at the Scheldt, the fat lands which it waters, and the sky, his color is a trifle pale; but he loves full-blooded flesh, good living, and good weather. In germ, he has in him all of Antwerp, from the prodigious Rubens to the mediocre Teniers.

One cannot, especially after having understood Quentin Matsys, deny the necessity and the importance of the part to be played by the artists who turn toward Rome. The Gothic idea in Flanders, as in France and in Germany, had exhausted its resources. The time had come when the artist of the North must die or enter upon the personal research which the artist of the South was proposing to him. He accepted resolutely—Erasmus is of the same age as Jan de Mabuse and Quentin Matsys—and from this spirited submission there came



forth Shakespeare, Rubens, and Rembrandt as, later on, Newton, Lamarck, and Beethoven were to follow.

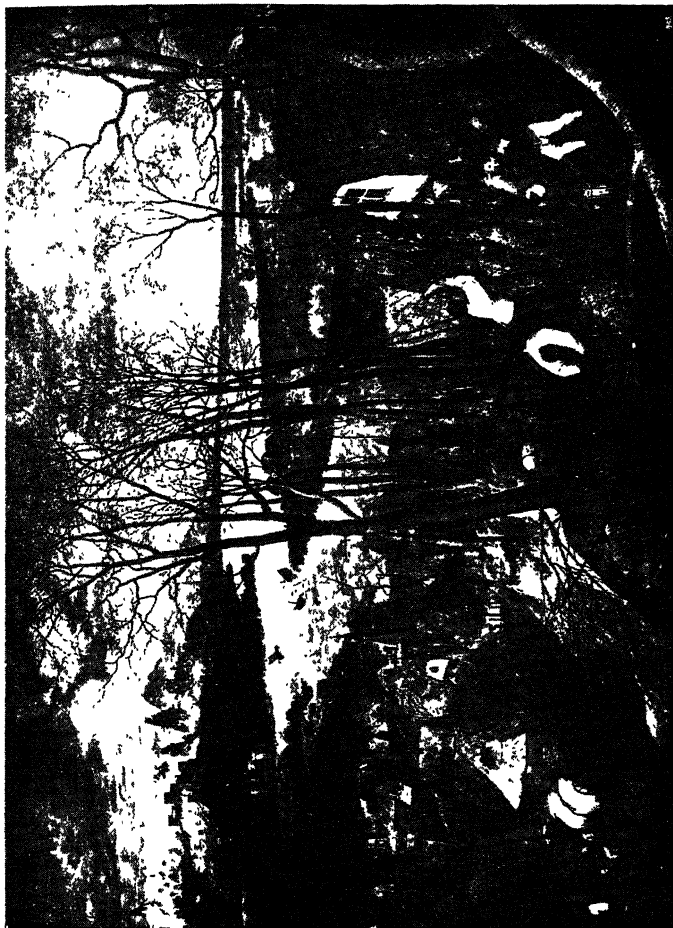
## v

Now, in Flanders, the first man whom this research revealed to himself was a peasant type whose unexpected manner of speech, whose bizarre and powerful



PETER BREUGHEL (?). Parable of the Blind Men.  
(*Naples Museum.*)

humor have caused him to be looked on too often as merely a comic primitive, perhaps a trifle ridiculous. He was a man of free and bold mind, of great and radiant soul, whose name was Peter Breughel. He had made the trip to Italy, without undue haste, I imagine, not oversupplied with money—on foot, very likely, loitering, retracing his steps, going roundabout ways in order to walk through the villages nestling among the hollows which he discovered off his road, stopping to draw a clump of trees, a herd, a group of workmen in the fields, the gesture of a child, or the form of a sky. He must have understood Italy. Instead of bringing



PETER BRUEGHEL. Autumn. (*Imperial Gallery, Vienna.*)

back from it calligraphic formulas and worn-out generalizations, he returned to Flanders to consider the image—apart from all traditional custom, from every preoccupation of a symbolic or religious nature, from all desire to relate his visions to the great collective and confused ideal which was dying, little by little, among the masses of people—an image very true and pure, but well thought out, very human, entirely personal, which Flanders had implanted in his heart.

He discovered that intimacy of the landscape toward which the painters of Flanders had been tending since the time of Pol de Limbourg, but to which not one of them, save Pol de Limbourg himself, van der Goes, and Patinir, had really penetrated; also Jerome Bosch, whose clownlike humor barely masks a profound and familiar sense of the good peasant soil, of harvests, hay-making, seed-time, and plowing. The van Eycks, indeed, had shown how the plains recede behind the processions and the cavalcades which defiled before their eyes, and Dirk Bouts and Memling had perceived, to be sure, that the undulations of the landscape lose themselves in blue mists the farther away they appear in the distance. But not one among these artists, not even Jan van Eyck, had dared really to confess to himself that the cavaliers, the soldiers, and the prophets were scarcely more than a pretext for them and that the trees and the skies made a stronger appeal to them. And perhaps they cared too much for the heavy draperies, the tapestries, and the robes of green or black velvet or of red cloth really to search out in the countryside, attracted toward it as they were, anything else but harmonies corresponding with their subject—a sumptuous and fraternal accompaniment for the scenes in the foreground.

With Breughel, everything changes, or rather everything matures. He places himself in the center of the plains, and it is the plain itself that lives; the man crossing it does not live with a life any different from its own; he shares in all its changes and all its dramas; he has its habits, its desires, and its needs. With equal interest, the painter demands of men and trees that they commune with him. They are his friends by the same right as the others, he retells the confidences which he has received from inanimate and animate nature with the same simple lyricism, spontaneous, but patient, and perhaps a bit mischievous. Or rather, nothing among all earthly things is inanimate for him—nothing, not even the soil, not even the chips of dead wood, not even objects manufactured by the hand of man, not even the little stones along the road. All of that speaks to him at the same time, discreetly, chatting with him, whispering to him all about its little personal life, modest, but determined to lose none of its rights.

How is it that from this accumulation of little facts so powerful a life comes forth? Whether he is walking through the street or the square of a village, or whether he happens to be standing alone amid the fields, he sees everything, even to the tiniest things, and he pictures them all, suffusing the whole with such animation that the universal poetry of the crowd and of the earth flows over one like a strong, slow wave. How is it that one can count the hundreds of children whom he shows at play, distinguish their little toys, take part in their games; how is it that one can listen to the wrangling and gossiping of the housewives gathered into groups or wiping the noses of their children or sweeping in front of their door; how is it that with a sympathetic glance our eye follows the poor people who come and

go with their carts and their tools and that at the same time one can grasp the main idea of the scene, the disordered swarming of all this humble humanity and recognize, in the confused murmur, laughing and weeping, all the cries, all the calls, and all the whispered tales? How can he perceive all the leaves of the trees, all their slender branches against the white sky, all the blades of grass, distinguish all the birds that flutter and that hop, describe one after another all the windows of the houses and yet withal give to the whole of nature that collective life in which nothing is isolated, but which envelops and covers all things with the same air and the same sky? How is it that he does not forget, when he tells some little story in all its petty details, that he is a painter, and that he is to sustain, from one end of the canvas to the other, the subtlest, the densest, the most discreet harmonies, making the tones work together with a minute science to which his tenderness gives a quality as moving as a singing voice?

His world is a living being that remains living whether seen from near by or from afar, living in the superior and imposing harmony of all its accumulated elements, living in each one of the atoms whose obscure functioning assures that harmony. He bears that life in himself; one would say that he was independent of the meticulous poet who envelops his observation with so much mystery, submitting simply to the rhythm of the seasons and to the irregular flight of the winds and the clouds, and who yields himself, with the earth and the sky, the vegetation, the crops, the beasts and the men, to the most imperceptible tremor of the immense universe. There is not a blade of grass but is affected when the air and the water are affected by the darkening of the sky, not a wave of the river but knows

that it is to strike against a projection of the bank and turn from its course, not a cottage roof but changes its expression when the clump of trees in which it hides is covered with leaves or is stripped of them, not a man, not a dog, that walks with the same step on snow-



PETER BREUGHEL. The Massacre of the Innocents.  
(*Brussels Museum.*)

covered ground, on the muddy ground of spring and autumn, and on the ground that is carpeted in summer with warm grass; there is not a tree which does not cut clear and black against the great white landscape of the silent winter, or which does not belong, through the vaporous foliage which it has in August, to the vapors that rise from the earth. Spring quivers and murmurs. Torpid summer has its odor of hay and of sweat; autumn is heavy with all the herds that toss their heads, with its overladen trees, its full houses, its swelling breasts. And now comes the wind; the



PETER BRUEGHEL. Winter. (*Imperial Gallery, Vienna.*)

branches are stripped and man hastens to regain his dwelling. And in the clear air of winter or the darkened air of winter, the sleeping earth no longer moves, and one hears no other sound than that given forth by the vibration of water and ice. Into the almost dead harmonies of the seasons, when everything is wet by the rain caught in the grip of the cold, space absorbs the poor or blurred huts whose walls are rubbed down with earth and whose roofs are brushed by the sky that they may have their share in the all-embracing splendor of the world. When the winter is violent and black, it is harder to bear, with its frozen soil that crackles to the tips of the branches, than when the snow has covered its bare carcass and dulled all its sounds, save the voices of men who are climbing a hillside, astonished to find themselves alone.

The great painter who has shown us all this is a man of good heart. That is why he is willing to share the secret misery or the secret happiness of the water, the earth, the foliage, the beasts, the soil, and the air. Like Jerome Bosch, who influenced him greatly, he certainly knew the pain of his century. But he quickly abandoned the exaggerated, unreal, and bizarre symbolism of Bosch, his hell swarming with composite monsters and all the grotesque nightmares of his weird and fantastic mind; as the younger man, Breughel could foresee the approach of the horrible drama which was to drown the kind earth in blood and veil with smoke the great sky of the Netherlands. Beginning about 1520, the ideas of the Reformation had entered Flanders, and since Spain was master there, the books are being burned, the apostles tortured, and the stake is always ready for its victims. Perhaps Breughel knew Antonio Moro, an implacable soul with the savage eyes of a



Fleming completely dominated by Spain, such a man as could give us the atrocious effigy of the Duke of Alba, that executioner whose diseased mind was to express itself through boiling or crucifying the "Beggars" or breaking them upon the wheel. Breughel suffers at the sight of all of this, but as he has imbibed



PETER BREUGHEL. *Autumn*, detail.  
(*Imperial Gallery, Vienna.*)

the sweetness of the countryside, he says nothing, but contents himself with paraphrasing for the future the old legends of the Bible. Always a lover of little children, he has portrayed in the details and in the whole of his pictures—with the torrentlike verve of his contemporary, Rabelais—all their games, leapfrog, sliding-ponds, rounders, marbles, tops, stilts, "straight-oak" and playing at grown-ups; with tender irony he has described their busy and serious little life, from the older ones who play at war to the little ones who make

mud pies or who gravely rake their own excrement; here are all the games of the little children who play at life. Always a lover of the poor little children grotesquely decked out with patched trousers that are too long for them, with coarse shoes, with skirts that are too big and that make them look bulky, and with



PETER BREUGHEL (or School of). The Harvest.  
(*Lille Museum.*)

women's handkerchiefs so large that only their little numb fingers stick out from under them, he placed the "Massacre of the Innocents" in a poor village, under the snow; there are ten cottages surrounding a church spire, the pond and the brook are frozen, and a squadron of men clad in iron shut off escape with their raised lances. The soldiers do their work, the mothers struggle with pitiful gestures, poor people surrounding the indifferent captains implore their mercy, the little

ones, knowing nothing and thinking perhaps that it is a game, allow themselves be killed without even looking at the murderers; there are some dogs playing about, a bird, some blood on the ground, a little body stretched out. And that is all. Before his death, he saw the passing of the iconoclasts; he may have seen them breaking the statues and slashing the images which he loved. There is no difference between those who break the idol and those who have unlearned how it must be adored. He already knew that perfectly well; he has spoken his thought in the "Parable of the Blind Men" with its indifferent landscape and the weak chain of men, the empty eye-sockets in their faces upturned toward the sky as they totter along in the absolute darkness of destiny and of reason.

The Gothic men had introduced nature into the cathedral, but in fragments, as decorative elements. The cathedral, from top to bottom, was a symbol, but a symbol fixed by dogma, accepted by the crowd as a revelation of truth. If the Flemings, at the end of the sixteenth century, have definitely consented to enter the modern world, whose program had just been outlined by da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Titian, it is with Peter Breughel and through Peter Breughel, who has revealed to the soul of the North the entire body of nature and who has brought eternal symbolism back to the appreciation of the spirit.



FONTAINEBLEAU

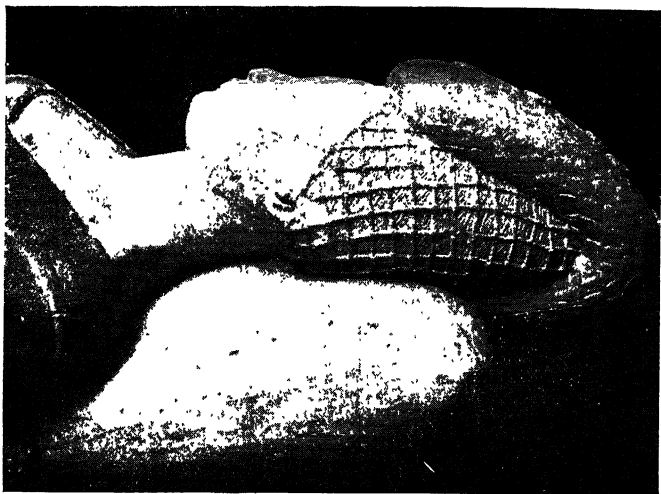
## Chapter V. FONTAINEBLEAU, THE LOIRE, AND THE VALOIS

### I



IN the fifteenth century the art of the Gothic image maker was not entirely extinct, but outside of the conquered provinces it could not survive unless it abandoned the disrupted architectural symphony never to return. As the Commune was finished, as the monarchy had neither the time nor the leisure nor the resources to complete the cathedrals, sculpture took refuge in the only place near which war passed without entering. Rather than disappear, it peopled the silent naves and the darkness of the burial vaults with great recumbent figures which, with their symbolism the more moving because it was involuntary, participated both in the death struggle of that dream of a social order which had arisen in the mind of the crowd that had vanished two centuries before, and in the crisis of that dream of the monarchy which was

threatening to miscarry. The French sculptors who had covered their country with workmen, with peasants, with animals, with leaves, and with flowers of stone now made nothing except tombs, and tombs of kings. They stretched out man and woman side by side, strong and grave, and not doubting in death any more than they



TOMB OF JEANNE DE MONTEJEAN. Detail.

had in life; in them they formulated their own strength, their own gravity, and the hope of consolation which they no longer expected upon earth. Technical questions increase rapidly, it is true, in the admirable clasped hands, in the beautiful, pure faces with the closed eyes, in the head-dresses, the draperies, the robes, the escutcheons, and the armor. But although its faith becomes less strong each day, although it is besieged by the increasing influence of Italy, the tradition of the Gothic image maker still guides the sculptor



JEAN MALOUEL (?). *The Virgin and Child.* (*Private Collection.*)

of the tombs down to the time of Barthélémy Prieur, passing through André Beauneveu, Guillaume Regnault, and Germain Pilon himself. It was along an imperceptible slope that he glided from the profound sentiment for righteousness and for death to the anatomical



JEAN MALOUËL (?). *Pieta.* (*Louvre.*)

science which led Germain Pilon to stretch out his queen and his king nude upon the slab of the tomb.

The art of the tombs is the connecting link between the French artist and the French monarchy. There is no more communal frankness, there are no longer any well-defined provinces, there is no longer a national territory in formation. The great vassals divide up the lands which are not occupied by the English. Hence-

forth, France is the king, until the time when monarchical centralization shall, through the king, have remade France. Where the king goes the artist goes, and the fate and the life of the king will decide, if not



FISHING. (*Fresco of the palace of the Popes, Avignon.*)

the nature of the artist, at least his pretext for manifesting it.

Outside the limits of the English invasion, in Burgundy and in Flanders, one gets the tufty, materialistic, and exuberant art of the industrial cities, of well-filled barns and generous stores of wine. In the occupied provinces we see the flamboyant death struggle of the churches, the miserable image maker seeking his mystic paradises, and Jean Malouel, the artist who remained faithful to the Paris which was ruined by the great wars, weeping with the mothers over their little ones, seeing nothing more than a sick people, adoring the martyrs, and hating the executioners. All the health of France, a precarious and tottering health, to tell the truth,



threatened at every moment, clings to the uncertain fortune of the Valois. It is an art of poverty, thin and threadbare like themselves, but it is alive and that is the essential thing. Despite everything, the hope of the people sustains and accompanies the wander-



SCHOOL OF PROVENCE, 1480.

Adoration, detail.

(*Musée Calvy, Avignon.*)

ing princes. Jean Foucquet is of the same age as Joan of Arc, and the French idea perpetuates itself in the pages of the missals which he illuminates for King Charles the Seventh, even as it was affirmed under the walls of Orléans, at Patay, at Rheims, and at Rouen. The voice is weak because it is isolated, but it is pure. Before Charles the Seventh, Jean le Bon had heard that of

Girard d'Orléans. After him Louis XI will hear that of Villon; Francis I will hear that of Rabelais; Henri II, that of Jean Goujon; and Charles the Ninth that of Ronsard. This race, in its decomposition and the weakness of its spirit, still managed to entwine the royal lily grown blue with poison and the laurel steeped in blood with the oak leaves which the wind of national or civil



SCHOOL OF AVIGNON. The life of Saint Mitre, detail.  
(*Cathedral of Aix.*)

wars tore from the Gothic forest. Half Italian, they never entirely misread the meaning of French thought.

Our old painting, in that peaceful Touraine where the kings, driven from the basin of the Seine, had taken refuge, came forth, as in other places, from the Books of Hours which had grown too narrow to contain it. But the flames of hell and the burning paradises did not



SCHOOL OF AVIGNON. *Pieta.* (*Louvre.*)

attract it very strongly. It had the good sense of our men of central France, their purity of accent, and their wisdom with its hint of raillery. It came from the country of the good Agnès Sorel, of the broad and healthy Rabelais, of the methodical Descartes, and of Honoré de Balzac who says such rich things in such bare language. It was happy to be alive, and in its thought there was no fatigue. No one was more capable than Foucquet of combining great lines on a background of gold, of quietly building up portraits of sick and ungainly kings, of solid chancellors, of charming



FROMENT D'AVIGNON. *The Burning Bush*, detail. Portrait of Jeanne de Laval. (*Cathedral of Aix-en-Provence.*)

young women with bare breast and eyes lowered under their veils, an imponderable spirit of tenderness and intelligence floating all about them, in the discreet and reasoned harmony of a painting as limpid as a spring morning. Father and master of French painting, he had, to the highest degree, its structural virtues, a little bit dry, they say, because the lyricism of the color is lacking or reveals itself only little by little—modestly, like a spring that hides among the grasses instead of rushing forth like a torrent. They are powerful virtues, the common property of all our arts—literature, the theater, sculpture, painting, drawing, and music; and they carry along without interruption our eight centuries of architecture in their definite order, their measured cadence, their sensibility which is contained within the outlines of the framework, their depths without shadows and their emotion without shrieking. Father and master of the great sober portrait, in its probity, in its fullness as of a block, never was he more at his ease, however, than when, quite forgetting the magnificent realism of Flanders which he knew through the manuscripts, and the nervous idealism of the Italians whom he studied during a journey to the peninsula in the time of his youth, he set himself to tell, with secret tenderness, of the intimate and peaceful poetry of the fields, the familiar detail of domestic life, and of the neat and active labor of the housewives of Touraine, attending to their linen, embroidering their bed covers, arranging their wardrobes, and watching their soup and their fires. He had a feeling for nature scarcely to be found outside of a people of husbandmen, and which is peculiarly French. His idylls are those of peasants; he spoke as one familiar with the herds that belong to men, and the workers of the soil. All things accepted the life that



JEAN FOUCQUET (?). The man with the glass of wine. (*Louvre.*)

was theirs. There had to be a rapid trend toward aristocracy before painting could follow the hard, proud, and prophetic style of the Italian artists and give to French art its brief spurt toward a lyrical interpretation of form which was to be realized for a moment in Jean Goujon. Foucquet had neither the desire nor the feel-



JEAN FOUCQUET. Birth of John the Baptist, Book of Hours of E. Chevalier. (*Chantilly.*)

ing for drama, and when it passed before him he took more interest in its psychological structure than in the passion manifested in it. Almost always, he was more attentive than enthusiastic and more interested than moved, or rather, he never allowed his emotion to overstep the bounds of his irreproachable sense of measure. A man witty and tender, with a bit of roguery, penetrating even though ingenuous, and much pleased with

his own ingenuousness. When he paints the circles of azure and of fire which protect his paradise, he knows full well that they can be of no other red and no other blue than the trees of Judea and the cornflowers of his Touraine. And the acid greens of the meadows and the vinous pinks of the chestnut flowers invariably



JEAN FOUQUET. St. Margaret, Book of Hours of  
E. Chevalier. (*Louvre.*)

appear under the impalpable bloom of gold which gives the event of daily life its religious significance.

We shall scarcely find this conscious simplicity, this precise vigor, and this malicious candor again in our history until two or three centuries after Fouquet, with *La Fontaine*, with *Molière*, with *Chardin*. They are clearly of this country and of this period; in places they prolong the diminishing murmur of the crowds.



Oftentimes they are still anonymous, as if France were trying to resist as long as she could that tempting individualism in which Italy is instructing her. In these beautiful hands so calmly poised, in these amused faces, tender eyes, and mischievous mouths, the old image makers and the psychological storytellers continue their art, just as they will find themselves again by way



STORY OF STS. GERVAIS AND PROTAIS. Tapestry. (XVth Century.)  
(*Cathedral of Angers.*)

of the moralists and so reach the short stories of Voltaire. It is certain that through the mingling of ingenuousness, mischievousness, and the power of penetration, French portraiture reaches its proudest moment here, and it is first among all the schools of portraiture by reason of its value as psychology. During these two centuries of suffering, of observation, and of conquest, from Malouel to Lagneau, with Foucquet, Colin d'Amiens, the painters of Avignon, Perréal, the Clouets, Corneille de Lyon, and a dozen unknown men, the

school presents a continuity without weakness. But in the rising flood of Italianism, these voices are unheard by their contemporaries. In his church pictures, the master of Moulins, whose name perhaps was Jean Perréal, conceals his delicate French faces, the pure features of his children, and his stately gentleness which he gives forth with discretion as if it might offend the tastes of the court and the new fashions. As for the Clouets, it is in vain that they possess the almost exclusive privilege of reproducing the lineaments of the kings, the queens, the princes, and the great vassals; their importance at the court of the last Valois is really a slight one. Their sitters posed but briefly before them, as if before a lens whose pitiless testimony is to be shown to a few intimates only. Their probity, their observation, and their penetration are such, it is true, that in a few lines, a few lights, and a few shadows barely indicated, they fix forever in their sketches, so devoid of all pomp and even of irony, the profound spirit which each fleeting moment reveals to him who can seize it. Their portraits seem almost to be traced directly from the contours of the face, the slit of the eyelids, the network of the veins as they appear on the surface, and each separate hair. They show us bad and sickly faces, the scars of broken abscesses, chlorosis and the festered ears that belong to this poisoned race of Italian bigots. D'Aubigné, more passionate but less cruel, must have got the feeling of these effigies, even as Brantôme must have known the sly faces and the quaint grace of Corneille de Lyon—one of the best qualified of his time to notice the pervasiveness and the furtiveness of life and to seize its spirit in the light of the eyes and the smile of the mouth; Corneille de Lyon, setting his people against blue or green backgrounds,

follows the same processes as the writers. These artists are historians above all. We have not known how to use their talent for minuteness, the continuing curves, the pure ovals, the enamel and jewels of their carefully and closely worked pigment, and their hard and tense harmonies. The princes whom they painted with wasplike waists stand before limpid backgrounds



CHÂTEAU DE LANGEAIS.

and their horses caparisoned with purple bear the kings to the fields of the cloth of gold; they make us forget the ugliness of their masters by installing them most elaborately in jewel boxes of crystalline fire.

## II

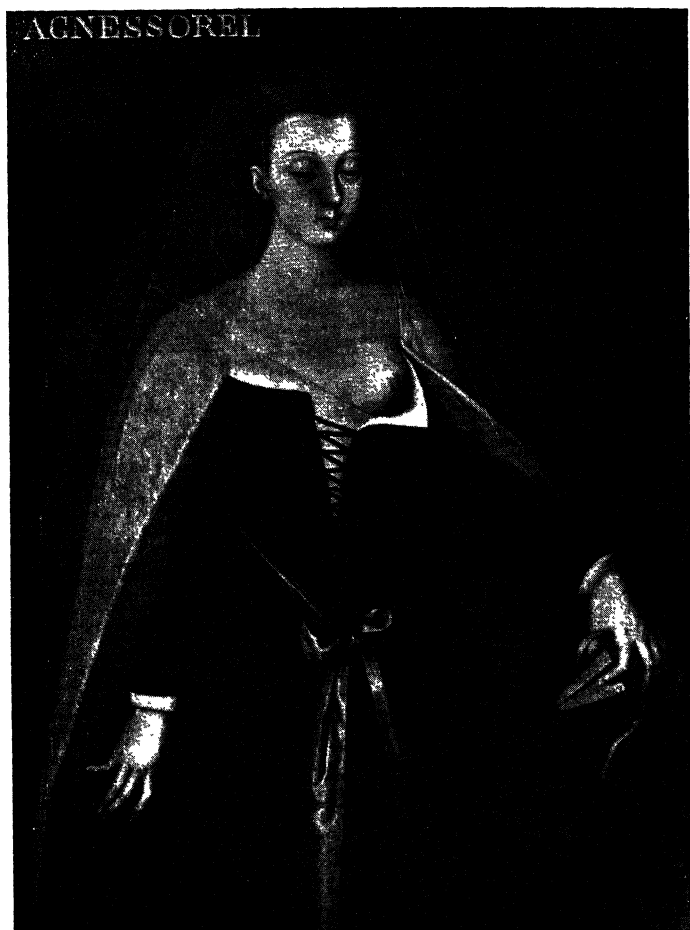
How does the soil, which nourishes the sculptors of the cathedrals, which nourishes Fouquet, which nourishes la Fontaine, and which nourishes the brothers Le Nain, which imposed upon the Clouets, though they were of Flemish stock, the precision and the sobriety of

its aspects, after having expressed itself completely in an explosion of love that united a thousand voices of the most homogeneous crowd, the one, perhaps, that is closest to the earth of all that have ever existed—how does it happen that this soil was prevented from reappearing with its own savor, save rarely, during the centuries that followed and in the work of a few isolated



CHÂTEAU DE JOSSELIN.

men? Its lack of accent, especially in this region of the Loire, is precisely what gives it a charm which was to envelop and hold those who are born and who live there. Nowhere do the hills follow one another so gently as in France; nowhere are things bathed in a calmer light, as distinct from the crudity of the South as it is from the profound brilliance of the North; nowhere are the waters clearer or the air and the soil lighter. The artists are born there in large numbers; few of them recall their surroundings. Too many men



SCHOOL OF JEAN FOUCQUET. Agnes Sorel. (*Private Collection.*)

are crossing France, situated at the crossroads of the modern world, between Spain, Italy, Germany, the Low Countries, and England, and bathed by the two seas which bring to her the East and the West. Never is she entirely herself, and she is constantly renewing herself. Therein is her weakness—and her strength. There is no hero to take her entirely into his soul, but instead a diffused intelligence which is constantly reborn from her ashes to teach the nations that they all participated in her formation and that she does not cease to act upon their development. It is a people born to be happy, peacefully to live by its own harvests and its own vintages, but condemned to eternal martyrdom because it does not give others time to understand it and because the others do not give it time to realize itself. That is the reason why it was in such haste to build the cathedral. It foresaw that it would no longer, perhaps, be able to bequeath its true image to the future.

Italy breathed into it a flame which was new, at least,



COLIN D'AMIENS. Louis XI.  
(*Private Collection.*)



PORTRAIT OF AN UNKNOWN WOMAN. (*Louvre.*)

and, in its declining strength, it had but little more resistance to offer. But the spirit of Burgundy and of Flanders which, in the past, it had awakened, now impressed it in turn. We see Michel Colombe leave the great nave to enter the colored shadow of a chapel and bend over the great theatrical tomb of the Burgundian princes. His desire was to equal its pompous luxury, but that was impossible. Something thin and enervated, a kind of fiery tension toward the idea of the beauty of form, announces the invasion of Italian idealism and, unhappily, of its formulas as well. The façades of a hundred mansions, of a hundred churches, the rood-lofts, the pulpits, the pews, the grating of the choirs, the stained-glass windows, the carved wood, the forged iron, and the ceramics of the period all bear the same imprint. Seduced by so much grace, France is about to surrender herself.



MICHEL COLOMBE. Tomb of Francis II of Brittany, detail.  
(*Cathedral of Nantes.*)

For a long time Avignon had arrested the transalpine spirit in its course, which preferred to mount through the valley of the Rhône to mingle with Burgundy and with Flanders and so avoid the territories that had



been ruined by war. Beginning with the first half of the fourteenth century, with the popes, Italy had made the moral conquest of Provence, already well prepared to receive her through the ancient Greco-Latin memories of the land and the tradition of love that had never ceased to reign there. Giotto barely missed coming to Avignon. In that city Petrarch had demanded the portrait of Laura from the great Simone Martini, who had come to cover with noble frescoes the halls of



MAGDALEN. (*Tomb of the Abbaye of Solesmes.*)

the palace of the popes. Unknown Frenchmen work there with him and after him. Within the majestic fortress the walls disappeared under the painted forests that were traversed by huntsmen, that were peopled with birds, and tapestried with fresh moss in which one

feels the quiver of the springs of living water. Even after the departure of the pontifical court, the city remained the meeting place for the civilization of the South and the civilization of the North. The proximity of the court of Aix where good King René, himself an illuminator, surrounded himself with image makers, with painters, with troubadours and minstrels, could not do otherwise than quicken the hearth of spirited culture which a century of peaceful activity had created there. Nicolas Froment, working there with him in the cool shadow of the cloisters and of the heavy castles, is the van Eyck of Avignon, because of his grave portraits which he hollowed out and which have the explosive violence of the South, and because of his dry landscapes which, even so, are burning with light and in which the orange trees grow; and many Burgundian artists, who had lost their employment upon the arrival of the Flemings, left Dijon for the valley of the Rhône. Enguerrand Charonton brought to it, from Laon, with the science and the color which he got from the Flemish painters, the clean workmanship and the health of the men of Champagne. Here, then, was the vibrant crucible of Italian force in which the materiality and the density of the painting of the North came to amalgamate itself with the acuteness of observation and the sobriety of the French! In the silent profundity of its browns, its reds, and its greens that turn almost to black as they undulate against the abstract background all of gold with distant spires and domes, in the tragic swaying of the great bodies that bend over the bare corpse, in this corpse itself, pure and carved out like an idea, the great "Pietà" of Avignon is one of the summits of the harmony. Outside of Italy and of Flanders, where everything, at that hour, was singing

like an orchestra in the great silence of France, it is now like the sound of a violoncello arising alone above the tombs.

Whatever the misery of France in the fifteenth century, the hearth from which that work came could not



THE MASTER OF MOULINS. The Nativity. (*Episcopal Palace of Autun.*)

fail to cast some gleams into the imaginations of the artists from its provinces of the North. Even before the Gothic period, moreover, Italy had reacted upon them and the Romanesque was only an application of the essential principle of Roman architecture mingling with Eastern and Northern influences. The image makers, the master builders, and the glass makers of France were traveling about. There was an exchange of manuscripts, of furniture, of armor, and of wrought

iron and copper. But these were surface influences and the powerful life of the people assimilated them without knowing it. It needed the great military expedition of the end of the fifteenth century entirely to burst the dike formed by Avignon. Charles VIII brought back Italy in the train of his armies.

## III

The French monarchy could not refuse an ardent sympathy to Italian art. Ruined by a hundred years of wars, the guide of men whom that terrible period had caused to forget their own civilization, the monarchy was all the more dazzled by the treasures heaped up in the Lombard or Tuscan cities because Italian art, at this time, was beginning to become exterior, to apply itself more and more to the decoration of the palaces of a middle class that had grown rich, and of the chapels of the restored papacy. Money was coming back into the coffers of the French kings, peace was returning to the countryside; coming back to his France, and finding it benumbed, with its old springs dried up and its new springs not yet above ground, it was very natural that the king, in order to restore his castles, to build and decorate them, should think of bringing back with him some of those artists whose fecundity, whose facility, and whose nervous and abundant animation enchant him. Fra Giocondo, the architect, follows Louis XII to France. Francis I summons da Vinci, Benvenuto, Andrea del Sarto, and later Rosso and Primaticcio. Michael Angelo is foreshadowed.

The Loire, which the Valois had not yet abandoned after the fifty years in which they had grown accustomed to the life there, was to be the first halting place of these artists in their northward march. During the



PIERRE BONTEMPS. Tomb of Francis I, detail. (*Basilica of St. Denis.*)

whole war, it had been considered by the English and the French as the key to the territory. The lands which it waters are the face of France. In its course it unites the valley of the Rhône and the Central Plateau with Brittany, while the tributaries of its right bank connect it with the basin of the Seine and the tributaries of its left bank with the basin of the Garonne. One might say that all these long rivers bring to it in their waters the fat lands of the North, the thin lands of the South, and the great rain clouds which have been mirrored in their sources. The oak, the chestnut, the poplar, the willow, the grasslands, and the reeds all meet here. The "garden of France" is born and reborn continually among these great tranquil waters, their soft curves between the banks of sand and the leafy shores, and the flooded fields from which clumps of trees emerge. The French princes chose these great landscapes, abundant and pleasant, as places where they might forget the sufferings they had undergone in the preceding century and flee the responsibility for the



JEAN CLOUET. A daughter  
of Francis I (?).  
(*Private Collection.*)



JEAN CLOUET. Guillaume de Montmorency. (*Lyons Museum.*)

sufferings of their own century. The château built for pleasure succeeded the stronghold. It was still surrounded by great sleepy moats, it was sometimes built on rivers, but that was rather to have the murmur and the coolness of the waters than to protect it against the enemy from within or without. In the beginning, the new world indicates its character but slightly by the windows which open in the stone of the bare façades among the great pepper-box towers and which open upon the gardens. We have not yet seen the end of the austerity of the military edifices whose loopholes and battlements, through which boiling oil had flowed, animated the contour of the wall. Behind their thick masonry was the wealth accumulated by five generations of feudal lords, the deep coffers, the chests, the high-backed chairs, the sideboards whose wood is carved into flames, and the enormous profusion of flowers sown in the tapestries that are flooded with blacks and reds, but have the sober and powerful arrangement which Beauvais reserves for the seigneur; this confused mass of embroideries, goldwork, and carving will have to feel stifled and in need of room within the walls, and men will have to feel the desire to parade the vanity that comes with the acquisition of fortune before the façades break into flower, before the windows frame themselves with ornaments and cap themselves with pinnaced cornices, before the new architecture of the nobility shall appear in the space of a few years.

What is called French Renaissance architecture, that unprecise mixture of styles which, despite all, becomes a style, develops out of the multiple influences of the military construction, of the feudal centuries, of Gothic ornamentation, and of the counterfeit Greco-Roman art



devised by the Italians—the whole being erected at the edge of waters or in the vicinity of woods. In this style the essential architectural principle which the men of the twelfth century had seized in a flash, and which is



JUDITH. (Caen.)

to think first of the destination of the building, is absent, or at least the destination of the château is so secondary in importance, so temporary and superficial a matter, that it quite masks this architectural principle. The necessity for adapting the organ to the function demanded of it had compelled the master builders to use the simple forms which caused harmony to burst forth from the interior of the body of the edifice itself and to flood the exterior. Even during the death struggle of Gothic construction, the ornament is so much a part of the building that it is the building itself turning, little by little, into a bare skeleton, hollowed out, even to its bones, to permit the entrance of the light. The Renaissance, on the contrary, thinks

first of charming through the surface, of covering, with a gorgeous mantle, the body devoid of its skeleton, its muscles, and its blood. And all modern architecture has resulted from this error, which will be perpetuated until the day when new social needs will call for other organs.

The ornamentation is of a time when analysis has



JEAN CLOUET. Jeanne d'Albret. (*Private Collection.*)

begun, when the glass maker, the sculptor, and the painter all work for themselves, when a thousand influences, which the architect knows only too well, turn a single man into a dispersed multitude, whereas three



CHOIR STALL. Detail.  
(*Cathedral of Limoges.*)

centuries before an ignorant multitude acted like a single man. When fallen Italy has completely subdued the spirit of the builders, they so far abandon themselves to the decorative orgy that they turn even toward the Gothic artists, against whom they had intended to react, that they may seek instructions from them. And when these façades are not complicated by colonnades, by loggias, tribunes, galleries of arcades, and all the com-

plicated display of the new Italian decorators, the slate roofs, the great sloping roofs that undulate to the very cornices, are crushed under a wearisome forest of pinnacles, of steeples, of lanterns, of carved chimneys, and of monumental windows. There is a meager stylization, enervated and impoverished, of the old Gothic designs of foliage that was so full of the juices and the



FRANÇOIS CLOUET. Portrait presumed to be that of the artist, drawing. (*Louvre.*)

odors of the earth; there is an infinitely varied but infinitely monotonous combination of coiling stems, vases, shellwork, animals, flowers, and human forms which try to hide their misery through their abundance, and lose their breath in so doing. The last flicker of the Gothic passion has become a cold, exhausting, and forced debauch, a disappointing chase after a lost illusion—the saddest thing in the world, a great love that is dying and that is unwilling to admit it to itself. However, after fifty years of this French criticism, which alone was capable of recreating in the better minds a kind of intellectual enthusiasm which almost replaces instinct, the energy of Pierre Lescot and of Philibert Delorme will assure to the edifices which they construct a powerful skeleton; it arises from amid the accumulation of the materials with which they have to deal and which maintains its balance behind the stiff and sumptuous shell of the round or flat columns and of the Corinthian efflorescences, of the great corniced windows, of the bas-reliefs, and of the statues which frame them. And since the giving way of the too lofty vaults of Beauvais, French art was to know, in the Louvre, its first moment of hope.

## IV

In it there already awakens the need for an architectural system; it comes with force, but a force surrounded by that proud grace and by that sense of a nature made aristocratic with which the artists of that time delighted the feudal lords who had lost the coarseness of former times. The architectural system needed is one which shall tend to anticipate that agreement with the commands of the monarchical dogma, an agreement which is to be realized a century later.

In Paris, Catherine reigns and Diane is forgotten. The architect restrains his fantasy and concentrates it upon erecting, in the center of the city, the house symbolic of the autocracy. He is no longer in the heart of the woods, he has no longer to build the great hunting



LIGIER RICHIER. Fragment of a monument. (*Louvre.*)

castle where the king, amid the gallantry of his court, comes to rest from war by hunting the stag and the boar, where he and the beautiful women about him direct the course of religion and diplomacy. The architect no longer follows Francis I, going from the verdant parks of the Loire, where the abundance of tranquil waters soothes the fatigue of his flesh, to the deep forests of the Île de France, where his gross, carnal sensuality appeases itself in bloodshed. In these animated solitudes, if the architect had lost the sense of the need

of the people which makes great architecture, the painter and the sculptor felt the rise in themselves of creative elements, the power of which only the pagan world had known. When one wanders the lengths of the mysterious avenues which stretch away beneath the sunny trees; when one listens to the sound of hunters' horns, to the calls, the gallops, and the flights under the branches growing faint in the distance; when, under the shade of an oak, one reads the poems of Ronsard, scented with boxwood and with laurel—it seems as if furtive apparitions of bare breasts and haunches were animating the bed of the peaceful waters where sail the black and white swans. Primaticcio, after Rosso, had brought from Mantua, to decorate Fontainebleau, the enormous and abundant knowledge of his master, Giulio Romano, who had been trained in the Farnesine and in whom the admirable grace of Raphael was stifling under the bestial sensuality that had been loosed, and under which the Italy of the sixteenth century suddenly foundered, after the prophets of the Sistine had made their voices heard. Both artists had met the nymphs of the French forests. Rosso, in order to recover them, disrobed the royal favorites who, like them, wore a crescent in their blond hair. Primaticcio carried them in disorder into the great waxed and gilded halls, audaciously extended their long, wavelike forms amid the golden frames of the mirrors, and set great herculean bodies beside the monumental fireplaces and the windows; with the flowering breasts, the full haunches, and the moving hips of the nymphs he grouped fruits, wheat, grapes, and vegetables which were brought from the fields and the trellises for the table of the king. A worldly Olympus installed itself at the edge of the motionless pools which at times, in



SCHOOL OF CLOUET. Portrait of an unknown man. (*Louvre.*)



the evenings, when the hunter's call resounded, were purpled by torches and by blood.

It is into this atmosphere, drunk with sensuality and with the open air, that all the artists were to enter, when once the increasing glory of the monarchy had swept them into its orbit. Among all of them, one feels Ronsard again, the odor of the woods, the breath that issues from cool caves, a murmur of running waters, and the nude women in whom the poet of the gardens saw beautiful columns entwined with grape vine and ivy. It is as exiles from their true century that these artists appear, apart from the multitude, apart from its needs, its sufferings, and the spirit that stirred it. Nowhere do we find Montaigne, save at times with the Clouets. Nowhere do we find Rabelais save in the valiant and savory humor of the good sculptor, Pierre Bontems. There is no echo of the horrible religious wars, no odor of the fagots that burn flesh and books. The Protestant artists themselves have not all felt the passing of Calvin. Perhaps even so, is there not a little of his stark nature in the tombs of Barthélémy Prieur? And doubtless it is his dry vigor and his anguish that Ligier Richier is bringing back when he sets up on a pedestal a decomposing corpse offering its heart to heaven or when he assembles around the dead Christ a harsh and thin group of weeping women and of the men who bear the body. But Jean Goujon, the greatest of them all, has not set foot in the country. He is a Huguenot, but more pure and more gentle than austere; he wanders from the Loire to Fontainebleau, never averting his eyes from the wheatfields and the waters that are silvered by the breath of the wind.

There is nothing more French among us than this man who yet has nothing of our easy good nature nor

our bantering common sense, who owes to the Italians his education as an artist, and who is like a bond of union between France exiled in Italy with Giovanni da Bologna and Italy exiled in France with Primaticcio and Rosso. He is of that lyricism of France which very



PRIMATICCIO. Drawing. (*Louvre.*)

rarely appears alone, but whose flame arises as soon as Latin or Germanic lyricism has passed through the air near it. He is the impalpable idea which, from one end of this soil to the other, bends the harvests and the grasses with the wind. Whatever the material he works in, bronze or marble, statue or medallion, bas-relief or full round, he brings into sculpture, not the *processes* of painting as do the sculptors of the inferior periods, but a spirit which is not of painting, not even of music, that invisible fluid which passes with the winds, the



CORNEILLE DE LYON. Portrait. (*Chantilly.*)

perfumes, and the sonorous murmurs, through the air, the silence, and the waters; into his work he carries the whole of that diffused substance which floats restlessly in arrested forms—and even when the form stands alone and when around it there is neither air, nor silence, nor waters.

Have you seen how one of Jean Goujon's faces smiles over a bare shoulder, how a young breast blooms in the



JEAN GOUJON. Tritons and Nereids of the Seine. (*Louvre.*)

angle made by a bending arm? Have you seen the wave that runs through these limbs, these hard, arched feet, the high calves of the legs, the long thighs, all the slender roundnesses that hide muscles of iron, the great forms that are made for leaping in the forest in pursuit of the deer or to flee "like a trembling faun" when the royal huntsman crosses its path? From them comes forth an odor of watery moss, a breath of the damp forest. Those beautiful, pure arms which flow from the shoulders are a liquid column issuing from an urn; those torsos turn upon the haunches with the fluidity of the tides that meet and mingle before surrendering themselves to the same current; those draperies stirred by the breeze form lines like those on the surface of the water; there is a sound of springs and of fountains, of



JEAN GOUJON. *Charity.* (*Château d'Anet.*)

the lazy undulation of the willows, of the murmur of the poplars; one sees the long curves of the rivers of France and the silver gleam they make among the reeds and the water plants.

Truly, from Rosso and from Primaticcio to Jean Goujon, and especially with Goujon, there was in this



JEAN GOUJON (or School of). Diana the Huntress. (*Cluny Museum.*)

art of the glades, of the ponds, and of the forests, this art of statues and of columns half seen behind a wall of branches, a most admirable sentiment of the feminine body amid nature. This sentiment was to decline very quickly in the measure that monarchical absolutism increased, but it could not fail to assert itself with the passionate vigor of a springtime both on the morrow of the nameless sufferings lived through by the people of France, and in the hope of a resurrection held out to the people by the young and beauty-loving royal family that fled from the devastated cities to take possession of itself. The art of an aristocracy, the art of a caste



JEAN GOUJON. Fountain of the Innocents, bas-reliefs. (*Paris.*)

even, but superior to its function because it sprang like a young shoot from an old tree and because, in a language different from that spoken by the men who lived in the fever of the time—Rabelais, d'Aubigné, the reformers, the printers, the booksellers, and the inventors—it affirmed the invincible vitality of a race that had been crushed to earth by more than a hundred years of sorrow and misery. If the violent fervency of belief in the future, the characteristic of this century, is not felt in the work of Jean Goujon, he, more than any of the others, possesses its humanity, its profound and sacred tenderness for everything that represents the forces of to-morrow. Have we sufficiently noted that these poets of woman were also the poets of childhood? Have we sufficiently noted that the Gothic men, in the strength and in the hardihood of their life, had felt but little of the glory of the child which sprang from the mother's womb as a manifestation of their vigor, too facile and too frequent for them to think of representing it? Have we sufficiently noted that their love goes out to the woman as a mother, that it is the hips, one higher than the other, and her arm wearied by the weight that it carries, which aroused their tenderness rather than the child itself, which is almost always inexpressive and commonplace as it rests upon that arm?

The Italians alone, from the time of their old masters, from Giovanni Pisano, Jacopo della Quercia, and especially Donatello and the della Robbias, had bent attentively over childhood. The idealistic peoples are too much attached to the beauty perceived through the senses not to desire it wherever it is to be found; they are so thoroughly concerned with the future that they cannot fail to perceive it in the being who bears its



secret within him. Is it their influence or is it rather the awakening of French individualism, the desire for general investigation, which seizes upon the western world in the sixteenth century? But Jean Goujon sud-



GERMAIN PILON. Tomb of René Birague, detail. (*Louvre.*)

denly perceives the beauty of childhood, of childhood delicate and plump; and Germain Pilon, the learned sculptor, who seems scarcely to think of anything except how he may prove that he knows his trade of cutting in stone the faithful portraits of his kings or of setting up around funeral urns or extending upon tombs his beautiful forms, bare and full, feels the mystery of a

childish face with a great swelling curve of the forehead, the exaggerated smallness of the nose, the exaggerated protrusion of the lips and cheeks, the delicious hesitation that makes all the features so unprecise; and Ligier Richier himself flees from his visions of hell and death as soon as there is a chance to model a skull as round as a ball and the fat, trembling mass, divine and fragile, of the flesh of a child swelling with blood and with milk. And thus we catch a glimpse of one of the faces of this time when the hope in the life of the world was sprouting amid the bruised flesh and the deadly vapors.



LAGNEAU. A prelate, drawing.  
(*École des Beaux-Arts.*)

The end of the Italian wars, the end of the civil wars, and the definitive triumph of the monarchy which had been active and fighting constantly despite its moral decomposition and its luxury, were to take away the especial accent of French art which had been revived by Roman influence and by contact with the woods and

the rivers. The king installs himself in the Louvre of Pierre Lescot and of Chambiges. The artist who follows him thither reads Malherbe instead of Ronsard; the streets of Paris and the words of Rabelais seem very coarse to him after having seen the palaces of Rome and of Venice, the Sistine of Michael Angelo, and the *Stanze* of Raphael. The fall will be as rapid as the rise was vigorous, and the artists who will mark the passage from the free invasion of Italian genius to the imposing dogmatism of the century of Louis XIV may rather be called witnesses of that passage than factors in it. Bernard Palissy and Jean Cousin are merely workmen in art. That which impresses us with the first man is that he has that human faith which made his century so powerful in western Europe. The second—painter, sculptor, glass maker, and geometrician—is scarcely more than the caricature of the universalist Italians, which the time demanded. Fréminet, the official artist, is a Michael Angelo of the mountebank's stage—his work is riddled with holes, covered with bumps, and full of wind. The soul of the people is mute. A terrible silence reigns over the work of the wearisome chatterers of literature and painting who, during a third of a century, will mumble the law under the shadow of the throne.

No matter. All that was to be. The Italian Renaissance could not fail to react strongly upon us. Isolation kills. Peoples, like men, cannot live within themselves eternally. They have to penetrate one another in order to seek resources which their contacts with unknown imaginations and sensibilities will reveal. After these encounters there is almost always a partial receding, but a profound work is going on, an invisible march toward further realizations which will be the more vast

and complex the greater the number of elements which have come to take part in them. Whether we will it or not, we must, in our battle for the ideas of the future, rely on the spirit that Renaissance Italy brought into us quite as much as on the popular strength which, in the Middle Ages, brought forth a thousand naves and two thousand towers



PORTRAIT OF FOUCQUET, enamel. (*Louvre.*)



NUREMBERG

## Chapter VI. GERMANY AND THE REFORMATION

### I



IF the Renaissance defines the manner of understanding and of expressing life for which the Italian artists gave the formula, it is even more difficult in Germany than in Flanders to connect with it the movement which, beginning at the end of the fourteenth century, carries all minds along with it. If the Renaissance is the affirmation of a new ideal, which demands the submission of those conquests of intuition and of faith now compromised to the double test of experience and of reason, we must recognize it in the North as well as in the South. And also, everywhere—except in France where the creative originality of the people had manifested itself two centuries earlier—there is the victorious revival of the national temperament opposing

its tendencies and its methods to the attempt of the church to reduce things to a single level. The German workman, taught by the mason and the image maker of France, dazzled by the painter of



MARY MAGDALEN. Wood, detail.  
(XVth century.) (*Cluny Museum.*)

the Low Countries, and conquered by the Italian draftsman and fresco painter, arrives by degrees at a consciousness of his gifts and of the needs of his race at about the same time that Flanders and Italy are defining their qualities and their desires. Each one seizes the tool that suits his hand.

The Gothic art which France was forgetting, which Italy was rejecting, and which Flanders was slowly transforming

so that she might attempt, with Breughel as later she would with Rubens, to find her accord with the thought of the South, continued to live much longer in Germany than anywhere else. In the seventeenth century it had not disappeared from Hildesheim. It was the Germans alone who developed its most important features, continuing to work in its ruins with an assiduity which prevented them from perceiving the enormous advance made by the adventurous mind of

the Italians and the French. It is not astonishing that for so long a time it was believed that Gothic art was of German stock. The architects, painters, and sculptors of Germany had, little by little, taken possession of everything which, in the immense treasury of forms



STEPHAN LOCHNER. Adoration of the Magi.  
(*Cologne Cathedral.*)

and ideas accumulated by the French artists in less than two centuries, could develop and flatter their nature. They rapidly lost sight of the profound principle of ogival architecture. And as it was very complex in its apparent simplicity, as it was very rich in lines harmonized to produce an effect of ensemble, very rich in ornaments to conceal or to accentuate the thousand organs which were necessary to its general function,



they strove to complicate these lines and to multiply these ornaments, thus following the tendency toward minutiae which is a characteristic of their mind. The new architectural forms which came from France and Italy toward the end of the fifteenth century could not fail, with their false decorations, to confuse still further the erudition of the builders on the right bank of the Rhine. There came to pass even this thing: that while many Italians and Frenchmen were deciding wholly to divorce architecture and the arts of ornamentation and were expressing themselves directly through sculpture and painting, the majority of the Germans obstinately persisted in placing together, in inextricable disorder, all the separate elements of the symphony of the people whose echoes had been scattered by the Frenchmen of the thirteenth century over the whole Occident and to the very gates of Asia.

The art of the sculptured and painted altar screens with which, since the fourteenth century, Germany had been encumbering her churches, was developed in this confusion. These coarse works, which display, with a patience which nothing could disturb, the scenes of the Passion in an orgy of awkward forms, of contorted attitudes, of grimacing faces, of crosses, spears, sponges, crowns of thorns, nails, and hammers, furnished inexhaustible nutriment for the popular industry of wood carving which has always been carried on by the peasants of Tyrol, the Harz, the Black Forest, the Alps, Franconia, and all the German mountains and valleys where the larch and the pine grow. These woods yield a soft material in which the knife works easily, going back over its grooves, spreading them out in every direction, making deep hollows under hair or fur, under the folds of cloths and under curling locks, and working

out the veins of hands and the wrinkles of faces; and so men pass their winter evenings, spare themselves the boredom of long watches, forget the solitude of the heights and the pasture lands, and bring incident into the monotony of the inner life which could not be satis-



CHRIST ON THE CROSS AND MARY. Fresco. (End of the XVth century.) (*Church of St. Severin, Cologne.*)

fied by too bare a plane or too pure an outline. When the man of the mountains and the woods approaches the cities, he will see the spires standing like lacework against the sky. He will walk about in the crooked streets which are overhung by the triangular façades embroidered with painted woods and with gilt inscriptions, where the immense tile roofs descend quite close to the ground, where the overdecorated cornices rise in steps amid the pointed gables, the chimneys, the stork's nests, and the warriors of gold unfurling the

inscriptions on their pennants. He will dip up his water from gaudily painted fountains, whose openwork pyramids are encumbered with sentimental or grotesque statues and with unexpected mechanisms. And when, in the workshop or in the booth, he comes upon the



MASTER OF THE LIFE OF MARY. Birth of the Virgin.  
(*Alte Pinakothek, Munich.*)

careful production of the good workmen in ivory and in metal, of the ironworkers, or the goldsmiths who lean over their dark benches, he will not rest until he himself has wrought some complicated thing in which will live again, in an order difficult to justify and impossible to define, the disordered sensations that he has collected in his travels. The churches, already overfilled with altar screens, pulpits, rood-lofts, tombs erected against the walls, and red and blue coats of arms weighted

down under plumed helmets, will see their oak pews perforated like sponges under the chisel of the wood carver, while enormous tabernacles obstruct the perspectives and add to the unfortunate effect of the sup-



MARTIN SCHOENGAUER. Mater  
Dolorosa, sketch. (*Louvre.*)

plementary ribbing through the tangled lines of their spindles and their points. The Tyrolese Michel Pacher and old Syrlin at Ulm open the road. They will give birth to legions of artisans, skillful at cutting wood into long, slender colonnades, in embroidering it, in turning it into guipure, in combining real faces illustrative of the Scriptures with the minutely crossed bars of rail-

ings, of spirals, of crowns of thorns, and tufts of thistles. The houses of the guilds, the breweries, and the city halls painted within and without with red, gold, and blue, arise at the same time from the pavement of the commercial cities, amid the hovels with their framework of brown wood, to give to the joiners, to the blacksmiths, to the image makers, and the glassworkers of Germany the opportunity to exercise their slow, near-sighted, tireless, and specialized industry. A swarming legion of dwarfs, of gnomes, and of kobolds take by

assault the beams and the carved furniture. The picturesque cities will be a museum of painted wood, in which not one bare edifice, not one straight line or pure curve, not one spot indicative of clearness and simplicity, will break the monotony. The alchemist, who handles his retorts or unrolls his parchments behind the green windowpanes set in leaden hexagons, will find again, upon crossing his threshold, all their tortured forms and the color of their illuminations in the frescoes which, among the Gothic ornaments, cover the façades of the Rathaus. It is an old, open book, corroded by the humidity of the street. In it one sees the unrolling of the cloths, of the banners, and of the plumes; one sees the useless volutes and the obstruction of the profuse, encroaching detail which make of German engraving, so rich and so patiently worked, the least authentic of works of art, but the most accomplished of the works of science, in their conscientiousness and their labor.

## II

In reality, German painting will never extricate itself from the original crafts which the artisans of the Middle Ages practiced side by side in the same workshops. The work in copper and bronze and the wood carvings are to be found again in the loftiest creations of Dürer and even of Holbein. There never was a better engraver on copper than Dürer, or a better engraver on wood than Holbein, and Holbein, though he is the only one of the German artists who did not remain a workman, never abandoned his wood block. In Germany, probably at the same time as in the Low Countries—at the beginning of the fifteenth century—engraving on wood appeared. The Florentine Finiguerra did no more than



HOUSE AT HILDESHEIM.

systematize, somewhat later, the German invention of engraving on metal. Leblond who, in the eighteenth century will discover engraving in colors, was of German descent, and Senefelder, the inventor of lithography, was a Bavarian. Printing, watch making, mechanics, and plastics all come out of the same black crucible into which the indefatigable mind of Germany was casting pellmell and indiscriminately the raw material of the industries it found immediately necessary. With the German, the tool tyrannizes over the artist, who follows it. With the Frenchmen or the Italian, the intelligence moves too quickly to give time for the tool to loiter over detail. If, in France and in Italy, the scientists are united with the artists in the same tendencies toward generalization and abstraction, it is in the processes of the craft and in application to their tasks that they join each other here.

The work is like that of a swarm of ants; it is the same with all the crafts and in all the cities, and this universal and diffuse character of German painting renders its development difficult to follow and obscures its origin. Unlike that of other countries, it does not follow a logically and regularly ascending line to reach a summit and then descend little by little; it advances by hesitating steps, in broken lines that cross one another, losing itself in inextricable meanderings, and sometimes moving backward; and when it seems ready to become conscious of itself, it suddenly stops forever. Its confused character corresponds with the confusion of mind, with the confusion of history and the confused and chaotic partitioning of the German soil. Intellectual centers light up everywhere, only to be extinguished by the breath of a war or a revolt or even without any reason, in many cases. There are none of those

broad movements which do not halt until their powerful avidity has exhausted the life that they contained. Prague, in the fourteenth century, has its school, which will be completely ruined by the atrocious war of the Hussites. Ulm, the prettiest city in Germany, with its painted houses, its colored shutters, its appetizing freshness, and its Rathaus, brilliant with paintings, has its school with Syrlin, with Multscher, and with Zeitbloom, until its activity is absorbed by the growth of Nuremberg. Holbein the Elder will found, at Augsburg, the school which his son will transport to Basel and which his pupil, Burgkmair, will carry on painfully until his death. Riemen-schneider, the sculptor, will work at



MEISTER WILHELM. The Virgin and Child. (*Cologne Museum.*)

Würzburg, while Cranach, the painter, will be the Saxon school all by himself. Hamburg had its local artists, which the decrepitude of the Hansa was very soon to discourage. Conrad Witz, a delicate landscapist, works at Constance. Colmar is contained entire in Martin Schoengauer. If Cologne continues longer, if indeed it





MASTER OF ST. SEVERIN. Portrait.  
(*Peltzen Collection, Cologne.*)

has the fortune to bring to Flanders—to Bruges in particular—a very large part of its initiation into plastics, a singular destiny wills that the city shall not escape from the narrowest primitivism save when it receives from Bruges itself such counsels as will cause the ruin and death of its precocious debility.

At no other place, not in Egypt nor in the France or the Italy of the Middle Ages, did the theologians and



SUABIAN SCHOOL. St. Catherine. (*Berlin Museum.*)

the doctors have a greater influence on the painters. Everywhere else the same profound power, arising out of the highest needs of human nature, impelled the philosopher and the artist with the same movement and in the same direction. Here, on the contrary, in the land of the scholiasts, in the heart of the devout and stupidly pedantic city which tried to plant Catholicism in the North, the artist is only a timid, obedient, and ignorant auxiliary of the abstracter of quintessences who holds him by the skin of the neck. From Wilhelm



PETER VISCHER.  
King Arthur, bronze.  
(*Cathedral of Innsbruck.*)

von Erle to Stephan Lochner, the anonymous artists of the fourteenth century are more like bigoted women than like pious men. Never does one discover in them even a tendency to express those passionate aspirations toward an increasingly ardent communion with the universal spirit which gives to the masters of Siena, for example, a strength so mysterious, so feverish, and with so marked an accent. Instead we see poor men riveted to the letter of the law, dull brains fed on complicated stories. When Lochner appears, about the time when van Eyck and van der Weyden in Flanders, della Quercia, Masaccio, Donatello, Angelico, and Bellini in Italy, and the painters of Avignon in France were affirming with so much energy the right of the individual to maintain his own activity, a little of the theological night seems to be dissipated for a time. In spite of the waxy quality of his paint, Stephan Lochner knows

how to detach from his golden heaven the pretty figures of the virgins with the long hands and the clear skin, a pious and gentle company which is bored by the complicated speculations and which decides delicately to enjoy the bourgeois comfort that the long-continued activity of the city begins to assure to it. His hell is only comic and his paradise a promise. When the pupils of the great Roger vander Weyden come, toward the end of the fifteenth century, bringing with them the bursting power and the full, heavy order of the painters of Bruges, Cologne will be too satiated and woe-begone to resist them. The candid soul of the Master of St. Severin



HOLBEIN THE ELDER. Young girl, drawing. (*Louvre.*)

and the delicate timidity and the attenuated color of the Master of the Life of Mary will disappear from the pictures of the last painters of the city as their ashen landscapes are effaced from the memory. Bartholomäus Bruyn, after Joos von Cleve, will indeed try, in the full tide of the sixteenth century, with cold attention, with irreproachable care, and with closely applied science to imagine a compromise, tinged with Italianism, between the primitive expression of Flanders and

of the Rhine. Exposed for so long a time on that great river to the influences of France and of the Low Countries, influences that had been too continuous and not sufficiently balanced, the strength of Germany withdraws more to the east and to the south, toward the interior of the continent where it will touch the old Germanic soil and so acquire once more the consciousness of its true significance.

Nuremberg was well situated for gathering up the currents necessary to the awakening of new desires. It served as a point of contact between the Hanseatic cities, Venice, the Rhine, and the Low Countries. All of Germany, with Burgundy, Hungary, and, by way of the Adriatic and the Danube, the Orient, gravitated toward her. A seething life animated her markets, her counters, and her banks, rolled through her narrow streets, rose from her black stalls with the strong voices of Hans Sachs and his friends, and gave to the guilds of her craftsmen that sweeping power which, two centuries before, had made a chorus of poets of the French masons. Through the ardor that united into a single block all who worked at the same bench, and through the feverish curiosity that tormented everyone of them, the spirit of the Middle Ages and the spirit of the Renaissance burned together in a confused ensemble. All the workers in art of southern Germany left their wooden villages, where the torrents leap between the houses with the flowery fronts, to come to Nuremberg and, amid the sound of the hammers and the humming of the forges, they cast the images of bronze, cast the type of the printers, chased copper and silver, worked in wood, twisted and painted the iron, and toothed and polished the steel of the watches. There we find the meeting-place of men like Adam Krafft, the stone cutter

who showed the very character of the German workman when he made his rude and good effigy kneel so that it might bear upon its shoulders a carved pyramid sixty feet in height, and Veit Stoss, the wood carver who, with his sentimental complications and his meticulous insistence, expressed the character of the German soul with its heavy good-naturedness. They found themselves in the company of the painters of the altar screens who had emigrated from the Rhine cities, and together they stood before the churches decorated by statue makers who owed their education to the artists of the old French images.

## III

Let us picture to ourselves the youthful Albrecht Dürer amid these surroundings of intense work and complicated activity, in which his old teacher, Wolgemuth, who in Cologne had been deeply impressed with Roger van der Weyden, points out to him, as an example, Pleydenwurff, the man who introduced Flemish painting into Nuremberg. . . . Again let us watch him listening passionately to the tales of the comrades who have come back from Italy, to which he is carried again by the pictures, even when mediocre, of Jacopo de' Barbari, who had come to stay in Nuremberg at about that time. . . . Let us accompany him to the workshop of his father, the goldsmith, where he eagerly studies the engravings of Martin Schoengauer, the master of Colmar, the austere engravings in which we are not spared the spectacle of the wounds of Christ and of the faces of the executioners, scenes whose dramatic force is increased by the ugliness and the misery of the models, by all the bitterness of the wave which represents the Middle Ages as they reach their



ALBRECHT DÜRER. Young girl. (*Berlin Museum.*)

end. . . . Let us imagine with what fever this passionate nature, always in love with poetry, music, and dancing, surprised in itself warlike forms riding the clouds; how it caught glimpses of dark pools where water sprites glide on a wave all spangled with gold; how all the land of Germany was swarming with spirits when, with the murmur of the street, there rose to his window the chorus of the Meistersinger. . . . Let us observe how this ardent and meditative sensibility bends back upon itself so that it may take possession of the atavistic forces which the ancient activity of the city, the sap which has accumulated in its soil deposit in the young mind and, mingling with them the wild reverie of the nomads of the Hungarian steppes, that comes to him with the blood of his father. . . . And then we can explain why, in this place and at this time, there was this fruition of mind which, three hundred years before the poets and the musicians of Germany, was to express, in a language more unexpected than theirs, its infinitely complex soul, realistic and sentimental, minutiae-loving and vague, infantile and apocalyptic—its soul which reflects with uncompromising precision all the images that wander before it and which yet is impossible to seize.

The first among all the Germans, he was an expression, complete and very lofty, of the life and the soil of Germany. In no other place, not in France, not in Flanders, not in Italy itself, is it possible to find a more typical representative of the erudite artist of those times, curious about all things, approaching the study of all things at the same time, and, with unrestrained ardor, heaping up in the same space the results of his researches. His art shows us the confluence and the eddy of two powerfully characterized moments of



activity. He has the faith of the Middle Ages, its confused strength and its rich and obscure symbolism; he has the restlessness of the Renaissance, its sense of the infinite perspectives which open before superior minds,



ALBRECHT DÜRER. Rape of Aymone, engraving. (*Bibliothèque Nationale.*)

and its indefatigable will to knowledge. Like da Vinci, whom he recalls in so many of his phases, but whose attempt to build up a method was a more lucid one, an ardent curiosity makes him one of those labyrinthian, universal, almost bizarre geniuses before whom all the roads of thought present themselves at the same time. He is a kind of Christ turned scientist who seeks

the salvation of the world in an intense study of its aspects.

Never, and least of all in the engravings which he cut into the copper with the hand of a workman, the heart of a poet, and the brain of a philosopher, never did he arrange nature. He considered it "the only master," and everything in it interested him to the same degree. In the greatest confusion, he saw the Christian myths enacted with German costumes, in German houses and

streets, amid the landscape around Nuremberg, near the waters that flow to the Danube, under rocks of strange form, at the threshold of wooden houses with sloping roofs. In giving form to the complicated and profound reveries which wandered through his meditation, he never placed them outside of the robust plains



ALBRECHT DÜRER. The Mills, drawing. (*Bibliothèque Nationale.*)

of southern Germany, away from the hills covered with larches, away from the pasture lands, the brooks, the pools, and the swaying bridges, never outside the places which he had traversed on his journeys to Italy and to Flanders, the banks of the Rhine striped with rows of vines, the forests, the ravines and the torrents of the Black Forest and Tyrol. With the legends which he gathered up everywhere there was mingled the Orient which he encountered in Venice; there are dragons, chimeras, lions, and camels; there are figures of Turks in Nuremberg households, and knights passing in front

of dungeons all bristling with sentry boxes and towers—death and the devil following close on their heels. With the unwearying patience, if not the rapidity and the schematic decision of the Japanese, with whom he so often betrays an affinity whenever his needle follows the capricious but clear line of his scrupulous land-



ALBRECHT DÜRER. The Knight  
and Death, engraving.

scapes, he pursues to the end a slow and wide research, the result of which he confided impartially to the dull splendor of the copper, to the savory grain of the wood, and to the dry glitter of his painted canvases. The massive horses of Germany, its muscular hunting dogs, its deer, its hares, its cows, its pigs groveling in the mud of the villages, all its insects and all its birds par-

ticipated, almost always, in the adventures of love, of the family, of the middle classes, and of warriors which the hard point of his engraving tool seized on with the force and the gentleness of a sensibility accessible to all spectacles. Everything aroused his passion and restlessness—the form of the grasses, of the tiny beasts, the moss on the rocks which are split by the patient growth of the roots, human or animal monstrosities, living

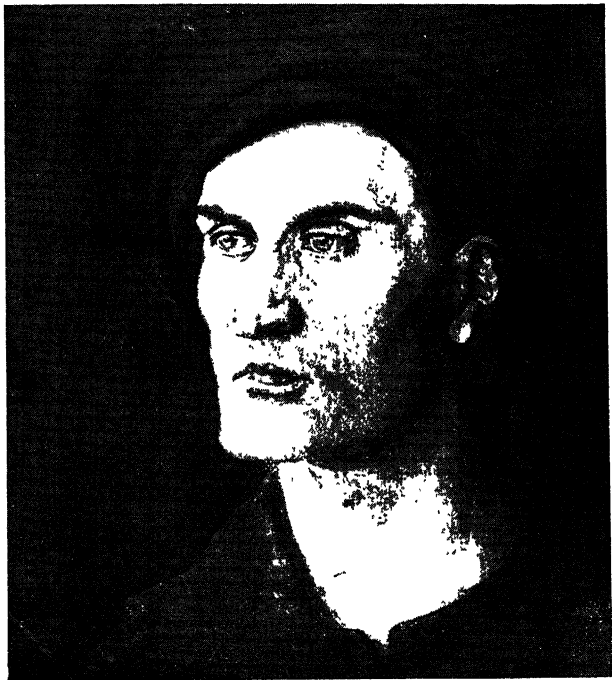


ALBRECHT DÜRER. Melancolia, engraving.

things and inert things, the breastplates of forged iron, the weapons, the helmets with their antennæ, and the banners with the coats of arms. He executed decorative designs for goldsmiths, ironworkers, costumers, armorers, printers, and booksellers. He wrote didactic treatises. His universal sympathy neglected nothing of what it judged necessary to the perfecting of his craft and of his mind, neither a bit of dead wood nor a heap of stones, nor the fortuitous manner in which the boundaries of a field were held in place with cords—which was not hidden from him by the great clouds of the sky, the swaying forests, the sight of women heavy with child, or by the mysterious harmony of earth and air.

If humanity interests him as strongly as a half-gnawed old bone, it does not attract him more. If he has signed portraits all-powerful in their hard and close modeling; if he has seen passing near him muscular men of irregular, ugly features, but of a severe elegance, and women with fat necks, round and full of face, whose heavy hair falls in curls, one finds in the bark of a tree, the stem of a grape vine, or in a rock that sticks out of a clump of grasses, the same knotty vigor, the same care in retaining the totality and the density of life, the same meticulous spirit. There are none of those audacious curves by which the Italians connect one form with another, not a hint of those subtle passages by which the Venetians or the Flemings make clear the incessant penetration of all the elements of the world. Everything is of equal importance and is separated fundamentally, without reciprocal echoes. . . . But everything is so searched out as to its form, so completely grasped in its intimate life, each detail is so deeply felt in its personal vibration, its imperceptible and mysterious characteristics, that the whole trembles and

murmurs, and an animation, general and vague, brings movement into this precise world. One might say that nature is recreated haphazardly, in the order, or rather in the absence of order, in which she presents herself



ALBRECHT DÜRER. Portrait of a Man.  
(*Alte Pinakothek, Munich.*)

to us; that man has not intervened to bring Nature to the human plane and through her to express the ideas which she had just revealed to him, but that he demands that nature sing unaided—with all her innumerable voices, among which the voice of man counts neither more nor less than the others—the confused poem that

she never interrupts. Already we have reached German pantheism. Seemingly it is not the result of an absorption of the body of the universe into the substance of man then springing forth therefrom with the powerful



T. RIEMENSCHNEIDER.  
Saint Barbara, wood.  
(Nuremberg Museum.)

and rhythmic intoxication which makes a living poem of the Hindu temples or the French cathedrals. It seems to express the impotence of a being who cannot separate that part of the world which he should accept from that part which he should reject, because he is too heavily armed for analysis, to study, without preconceptions, in all their aspects, and without order, the objects which present themselves to his view. Instead of absorbing nature, the man is wholly absorbed in nature.

This impossibility of choosing in the objective world those elements which could yield a logically and plastically harmonious construction forms the stumbling-block of German art, if we consider it as the general realization of a collective ideal expressing the race and hurrying it toward a clearly defined goal. With the German artist, everything in Nature is on the same plane. He will be capable of studying each one of the elements which make us love her with a patience, a science, and a conscientiousness superior to those displayed by the Italian, the Frenchman, the Dutchman, and the Fleming, if not the Japanese and the Chinese, and with a sensibility equal to theirs. He will not



MATTHIAS GRÜNEWALD. Christ on the Cross.  
(*Cassel Museum.*)



know, as they do, how to give to each thing in nature the importance that it has in our meditations; he will not know how to express in plastic generalizations the sensual, intellectual, or moral emotions which nature will yield him. Among two or three of the German artists we shall feel a great soul; it will not be able to define itself and never, as in other countries, will it leap into the torrent of powerfully organized life to join other strong or gracious souls so that together they may constitute a vast ensemble expression, forming a mass against the horizon of the past and sharply defining for the men of the future that which was thought and felt by a people of that moment. It is their whole history. Their power of analysis has blocked up for them, with a formidable heap of objects accumulated indiscriminately, the paths of the great syntheses. Their mathematicians did not find the law of gravitation. After their philosophers, with incomparable profundity, had verified one by one all the intuitions of the French and the Scotch—Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and Hume—it was not the Germans who discovered transformism which Lamarck formulated at about the moment when Hegel was showing himself powerless to decide for himself. Not one of the great hypotheses, that for a hundred years have been directing the researches of biologists, came out of their laboratories which, in experiments and in observations, are the most prolific in the world; and their ingenious mechanicians did not discover a single one of the great implements of exchange and of transportation which have made the modern world. They never go by the straightest road to the one that alone is essential and most logical. Detail always masks the ensemble; their universe is not continuous, but made up of juxtaposed fragments. One sees

them, in their pictures, giving the same importance to a halberd as to a human face; a motionless stone is made to hold our attention as much as a body in movement; one sees them drawing a landscape like a map in a geography, and, in the decoration of a building, giving as much care to a clock with marionettes as to the statue



LUCAS CRANACH. The Stag Hunt, drawing. (*Louvre.*)

of Hope or of Faith, treating that statue with the same processes as that clock; and, when by dint of conscientiousness and labor they have given monumental proportions to a market or a nave, they suspend inappropriate objects there, immediately ruining the effect of it.

Hence, as we have seen, their negative pantheism which Dürer, first of all, expresses with so much confused strength. Hence, their pessimism, which, three hundred years before Schopenhauer, envelops the work of the engraver of Nuremberg as with an invisible atmosphere. This art, patient, exact, and complicated, although poetic and sincere to the point of self-immolation, with its tormented fantasy, with its symbolism

profound, but at times so obscure that it seems not to understand itself—this art, despite the concentrated splendor of its vital power and its vast sensuality, exhales the definitive sadness of the man who cannot come to a decision. Everywhere the hour-glass measures the flight of time, while the idyll smiles or the drama calls forth its tears, and often death traverses a peaceful landscape made charming by a love story. In the “Melancholia,” which seems to summarize his whole work, one sees the genius of humanity borne down by lassitude, with all its conquests about it, because, despite its great wings, it has learned nothing of the essentials. Like Faust, Albrecht Dürer has ranged through all the worlds, in pursuit of the illusion which he has never been able to seize.

## IV

Without doubt, man suffers whatever he is and in whatever period he lives. But it is only the faculty or the need for analysis that leads him to look upon life from the angle of pessimism, no longer to see any other direction in it than death, to doubt that his painful effort can serve the men who are to come, or, at least, to give them his aid joylessly and contrary to his heart. This philosophic discouragement, the more surprising when we contrast it with the courage shown by the Germans in the working of the material and in the examination of the world, is common to almost all their thinkers and almost all their artists. The misfortunes of their century do not suffice to explain it. The countries of Germany, in the fifteenth century and at the beginning of the sixteenth, were as prosperous as Flanders or as Italy, and infinitely happier than France, which was torn to pieces, ruined, and bled white by a



LUCAS CRANACH. Venus. (*Frankfurt Museum.*)

hundred years of war. . . . And yet there is hardly a German engraving, almost no German picture or bas-relief, without the haunting presence of death. The hour-glass is almost always there, or some broken bones. And it is especially in Germany that the "Dance of Death" creaks and shivers among the leaves of the old books of images or on the painted beams of the wooden bridges which the torrents, passing through the old cities, shake upon their piles. Death takes part in all the events of life. A smiling skeleton assists at an accouchement, he joins in the games of the little ones, he chants the nuptial march as he walks before the couple, he helps the miser to count his gold, he urges on the horses of the plowman, he cuts the string by which the blind man holds the dog that leads him, he grasps the bow of the musician, at the anointing of the Emperors he carries the crown or the miter, he stares at his image in the mirror of the coquette, and to the woman in love he plays the final serenade. . . . Everywhere he bears witness to the worst of the disasters that can strike a race; he bears witness to intellectual despair.

And how, indeed, should the German find encouragement in the outer world, how should he manage to inscribe in harmonious form the meeting of a universe and a mind harmonious in their organizations? The appearances of the air and of the earth leave floating images in the memory. Now we see mountains unexpectedly jagged, romantic depths with verdure and rocks, now pine woods toward which sloping meadows ascend, following each other and repeating each other with discouraging monotony. Always ill-defined profiles of landscape, a green and red countryside, of a somber green and a somber red—dead colors without

transparence, to which the mist with its excessive dullness lends no splendor. Nature is robust, but mournful; varied, but lacking in those masses which unite without effort; it has none of that luminous atmosphere which transforms everything which it envelops. The very



LUCAS CRANACH. Johann-Friedrich der Grossmüthige and Sybil of Cleves. (*Weimar Museum.*)

flowers that garnish from top to bottom the windows of the poorest homes seem dulled and without perfume.

When the sky is cloudless, nothing attracts or holds one in this picturesque uniformity and nothing leads the eye from one place to another place. When the tattered mists drag along, now masking a forest of which only the phantom of a tree remains visible, now covering the whole river in which one gets glimpses of a fleeting light on the crest of a wave, or again conceal-

ing an enormous layer of granite so that a castle seems hung in space, now disarranging the planes, now drowning and dislocating the lines—the eye perceives only what is fragmentary and diffused in the life of nature. If one examines one of those foggy landscapes, whose forms become only too precise when one looks at them from too near by, it takes possession of one's being like



LUCAS CRANACH. *Paradise.* (*Imperial Gallery, Vienna.*)

an ensemble of sounds rather than an ensemble of objects: a murmur breaks forth, fades away, and is reborn only to die; it is the torrents or the fountains in their vibrant motion, it is the ducks and the geese snuffling about, it is the lowing of beasts, the crack of a whip, the cock crowing with a voice of iron, the hour falling from a bell, dead leaves swept along, the creak of a wheel, the beating of a wing. . . . These are no longer images which have been determined, but the

indistinct outlines of dreams, obscure enigmas which rise in the brain. When it is no longer possible for the soul to choose the visible elements of a harmony of form, its need for consolation and for a refuge causes it to turn back upon itself and in itself to seek the scattered elements of a harmony of sentiment. And thenceforward, without taking the precaution to subject the sentiment, which carries them away, to the control of the outer world, too ill-defined for them to seize, it is within themselves that men make their choice, and they turn to singing. I have seen young Germans singing as they landed at Venice. They were singing Schumann, turning their backs on the palaces which they had not yet looked at. Going down the Rhine, I have seen German girls singing. They sang the song of Heine at the moment when they were passing the Lorelei, to which they did not give a glance.

The primitive art of the Germanic peoples and of the Scandinavians, descending from the fjords and the forests of the North, was to remain and must remain the form of their moral activity. Music alone escapes the dangers of analysis and gives the illusion of the absolute in its expression of the vaguest ideas in mathematical form. The workmanlike and dreamy nature of the Germans is at ease in it, because it offers them at once the most precise of means and the most unprecise of ends. Exclusively symbolic, it expresses, through a great soul, the aspiration in which a whole people mingles, and it does so with added power because it has nothing to define and because it makes use of an immense treasury of floating forms, of merging colors, and of the diffused sensations accumulated during centuries in the poetic instinct of this people, throughout the course of its unconscious and repeated contacts with





ALTDORFER. Saint George. (*Alte Pinakothek, Munich.*)

the world. From the Nibelungen to Goethe, a dull torrent of intricate images runs through the German mind, from century to century. It was in this torrent that Dürer bathed. He is a musician, though unaware of it. Despite the finish of his pictures and of his engravings, despite his insistence on making each detail stand out, and despite his prodigious technique, the ensemble does not appear as a distinct form, but as an evocation, as a suggestion of the atmosphere of sentiment. It is a moral sentiment that dominates; everything contributes a little toward imposing it. It is impossible for the German artist-workman to extract a visible general idea from the object which he studies, and the more precise he is the less he succeeds. The general idea exists before the work and wanders confusedly.

When Martin Luther decided upon music as a means of influence at the hour when Dürer was attaining the highest summit of his nature, he was therefore seizing upon the language best fitted to reveal the unknown powers which the German people had been accumulating in itself, without thought of their existence, ever since its industrious cities, from the Rhine to Saxony and from Franconia to the Baltic, had revealed their power. The dissolution, which was taking place in Rome, horrified the conscience of the Germans, incapable as they were of perceiving that in the heart of Italy itself, from Giotto to Angelico and from Masaccio to Michael Angelo, the artists were voicing the protest of the spirit against the abjectness common to all the powers of society which no longer considered themselves in danger. The sensuous beauty of that protest, which the Germans' lack of the plastic sense prevented them from understanding, concealed its

moral beauty from them. And in Germany the Reformation took on a character of radical antagonism toward the Renaissance.

Besides, it had good reason. A people can make use only of the weapons offered it by its soil and by its blood. In Italy the movement toward hope had interpreted itself through form and color. Here it was to express itself through sounds and words. The Reformation, from John Huss to Luther, strives for the expansion of man, in another language and under another pretext, but with the same lyricism and the same faith as that of the great Italians. Luther had in him the seething life of the century. He was one of those tumultuous beings in whom, as in a soil vibrant with subterranean forces, the burning lava of the blood sweeps everything along with it in a wave of joy, of enthusiasm, and of pride, with beer and the juice of meats, and possessing an irresistible need to make the flame of the spirit burst from its prison. The violent mind of the Renaissance was in him. And it was predestined that the Renaissance, the great research carried on with uncompromising passion by all the peoples of western Europe together, should take on, in the North, the form that he gave it.

But let us be on our guard. If the crowds, swept along by his words, sang while they followed him, it was because a deep instinct spoke in them; it was that they entered, in spirit, into a vaulted church which their antiplastic genius had been unable to give them for three centuries and which their musical genius erected spontaneously. They were obeying that vague and powerful hope which takes possession of the multitudes when a strong man addresses himself to them to lead them forth to battle. Whereas the theologians

believed that they were lifting up the conscience, they were lifting up needs—legitimate and sacred—for liberation and for happiness. The drama, and consequently the revelation of conscience, has for its theater the heart of the hero alone. The heroism of the crowds, if aroused by the words fallen from the lips of the heroes, recog-



BARTOLOMÄUS BRUYN. *Picta.* (Berlin Museum.)

nizes less abstract motives, to which the heroes must give the highest expression. In the mass of the German people, there was no question of returning to the teachings of the apostles, but of freeing themselves from the powers in society which were threatening to crush its spirit.

If, in appearance, Germany was prosperous, if the lower middle class of its artisans was slowly heaping up the uncouth but innumerable products of its workmanlike industry, the country people were suffering. The

clergy held a third of the soil. Economically, Germany was under the domination of Rome. And Luther perceived that he had been mistaken as to the meaning which the crowd attached to his activity, on the day when, having consented to recognize the authority of the military lords of feudalism because he needed their aid in his struggle against the ecclesiastical lords of feudalism, he had been obliged to aid the Protestant nobility in crushing the miserable people who had been rendered fanatical by his words. The frightful war of the peasants gave to the Reformation its real significance. One class was replacing another in the possession of the soil; it was to stifle the moral life of Germany which for two centuries had been able to manifest itself with almost complete freedom, thanks to the antagonism of interests which set the two classes one against the other. The triumph of Protestantism coincided, through all Germany, with the abdication of its original thought. Nuremberg was extinguished.

## v

Leaving Holbein aside, Holbein, who was touched also by the ruin of the German cities, since it was because of his misery that he was forced to leave Basel at the age of forty years and repair to the court of Henry VIII; the great German painters, Cranach among others, are of the same time as Dürer. His two pupils, even, are scarcely younger than he; Hans von Kulmbach who, with dry application, continues his work as best he can, and Altdorfer who forgets the sorrows of the century in the self-conscious and glittering landscapes in which his somewhat weak dilettantism seeks in the German forest the shelter of its foliage and warms himself at the fire of the romantic twilight.



BARTOLOMÄUS BRUYN. Portrait. (*Cologne Museum.*)

The bricks of the German roofs, the opaque woodlands send forth for the last time a dull reflection of somber red and of green almost black, in the canvases of Burgkmair, wherein is dying the school of Augsburg, which, with Christoph Amberger, will hear no more than an echo, almost inaudible but pure, of the great voice of Holbein. Mathias Grünewald, the master of Alsace, hangs the horrible body of the Christ upon the cross by the two arms which are almost torn from their sockets, breaks the two feet with a nail, bruises the body, flays it, and soils it; Mathias Grünewald is, however, a painter, and far superior as a painter to Dürer, to Holbein, and even to Cranach. He knows how to give to his color the accent of the drama, how to agitate, harrow, and terrify one. He is as tragic as he is trivial; he is cruel, sinister, and drunk with strength and horror. Colins, a mysterious sculptor of the end of the century, seems to have spent almost all his life upon carving, in the marble of the tomb of Maximilian, a kind of epic, romantic and warlike; it is overloaded and exaggerated in its movement, but a powerful rhythm preserves it from confusion; it is a rhythm, we may note in passing, that comes from the Flemish country. With Colins, Grünewald is the great dramatist of this anarchical and meticulous school, one in its spirit and yet made up of pieces and of fragments. Only, he does not transmit to his pupil, Baldung Grien, whose nudes are elongated, rounded, and idealized in accordance with the counsel of the Italian painters destined to become tyrannical—he does not transmit the secret of his painting, thick, vulgar, but penetrating wholly into matter and space in a manner which nothing in Germany had given any premonition of, and which is to disappear completely with him. After Holbein, Germany will close her eyes



HANS HOLBEIN. The merchant Gisz. (*Berlin Museum.*)



in order to listen more attentively to the rise within her of the murmur of revolt which will burst forth over the earth like an unending call to love, forever renewing itself in sobs and rolling with them toward calm and triumph, on the day when Beethoven will tear the symphonies from his heart.

Now, is it the struggle of the emperors and the popes that killed German art, or is it the decrease of energy, of which German art had been the supreme manifestation, that permitted the struggle of the emperors and popes? Was not creative genius exhausted for the moment? Doubtless, fifty years earlier the German princes could not have laid their hands upon the movement of the Reformation. It is when the inner force is exhausting itself that the external forces gain control once more, and the political victory of a religion always marks the subsiding of the disinterested faith which formulated it little by little. All the German artists of the beginning of the sixteenth century announce Luther, and consequently the apogee and, at the same time, the beginning of the decline of the affirmations which he brings. Since the time of the cathedrals, moral ideas dominated German plastics, which, because of its impotence to choose in external nature, had never attained the balance of masses and of the arabesques of line which resolve the moral problem, with all the others, by establishing in the mind that feeling for plenitude and for continuity which we call harmony. One can imagine Masaccio or Michael Angelo struggling unceasingly against the excesses of his passionate nature in order to raise his character to the level of his philosophic spirit; one cannot imagine Dürer as living any other than a healthy life, without impossible desires, and remaining always a good workman, a good son, brother,

husband, father, and citizen. His four Evangelists illustrate the apostleship of Luther; and it is not the first time that they present themselves in Germany with so simple a firmness. In 1519, when Luther had scarcely begun his struggle, Peter Vischer, the coppersmith, with



HANS HOLBEIN. Fragment of a fresco. (*Basel Museum.*)

his leather apron about his waist, had come forth from his forge to listen to the tumult of the century. Round about him second-rate sculptors were exhausting the formula for sentimental mysticism of the Rhenish School (of which the questionable "Virgin of Nuremberg" is the fashionable climax); Tillmann Riemschneider, the nervous master of Würzburg, restive in

his shadow of asceticism, was seeking to carry over the lean elegance of Florence into his images of women with delicate hands, with heavy tresses, with astonished and candid faces, and pure bodies under their too complicated robes. And at this moment, Peter Vischer was demanding of his inflexible morality the secret of clear planes and well-defined volumes. Whether he cast armor in metal and made his figures live within it—those warriors as straight and sure as conscience, or whether he set up, round a tomb, his uncompromising apostles, one would say that in returning with the theorists of the Reformation to primitive Christianity, the very system that condemned the Renaissance, he was unconsciously bringing himself into agreement with the Renaissance in its summons to men to hope, even if Donatello gave a different name to that hope than he did.

With Dürer, perhaps even before Dürer, he is the spirit most clearly conscious of the forces which were urging the Reformer to action. The majority of the other artists went to him instinctively because they always incline to the thing that brilliantly sets the powers of life above the powers of death. In his violence and his joy were focused all the dispersed efforts in the direction of the light which each one of the workers of Germany was making in his obscure sphere. When Lucas Cranach traced the portrait of Melanchthon or that of Luther, with the respect and the emotion inspired by a thing that one understands but little and that one yet feels profoundly—when, at seventy-five years of age, he became the prisoner of the Empire at Mühlberg, he was certainly not expressing the desire to see the triumph of those principles in the name of which organized Protestantism was later to

drive the images from the temples, destroy the poem of the senses, condemn the affirmation of life, substitute the holiness of a single book for the holiness of all books affirmed by the Renaissance, and to complete, everywhere in Germany, the quenching of the fires of insurrection of which Dürer and Luther had been the greatest lights. It was with the joy of a child that he had loved the fighting and sensuous monk whose racy words, resounding lyricism and laughter, enchanted him. His confused wood-engravings, blond, shining, and of a charming warmth, were a means of propaganda among the people. In them one sees the Passion bleeding amid a strange procession of men in slashed cassocks, in shoes with turned-up points, amid rich trappings, horses with braided manes and with enormous tufts of plumes—the whole unrolling itself in unforeseen fashion. He translated into good German images the old poem of humanity which his friend translated into good German prose. He could have consented, less than anyone else, in order to assure the domination of a class, under pretext of religion or of morality, to set down the simple idylls revealed to him by the landscape of springtime, delicate and flowery, which he saw in his Saxon countryside. And less than anyone else because he had retained and was to retain until his death that freshness of sentiment in the German soul which Dürer scarcely knew. German pessimism never gained any hold on his heart because, in contrast with all the other masters of his race, he knew how to choose, and to choose spontaneously, far less like a scientist than like an artist. That is not to say that he was capable of rising to those powerful generalizations which are expressed by bare and rhythmical compositions, through which the heroes of art inclose within the architecture

and the movement of the form the scattered sensations which teach them, little by little, that the world is continuous. In the full tide of the sixteenth century, he is



HANS HOLBEIN. Luther's Wife. (*Galleria Corsini, Rome.*)

still a primitive; but this primitive, in his ingenuousness, is the first colorist after Grünewald and the most sensitive of all the German painters to the beauty of form.

He has not, certainly, the sense of the ridiculous. It is often the best means of confessing one's true nature. He paints nude women who have kept on their hats, very awkward women with thin legs, big flat feet, and big knees. But their faces are of an extreme charm, quite round, smiling, and a bit mischievous with their lovely blond tresses. Almost always he surprises them in the first hour of their womanhood; they have a firm, little belly, a pure undulation of the bust and the hip, budding breasts, and altogether the appearance of a flower hesitating to open. His candid sensuality directs his imagination into gardens all trembling with the flowers scattered about where mythological nudities, imperfect and delightful in form, assure us that the Reformer and his friends must not be made responsible for the unhealthy preoccupations which characterize the activity of the Protestant sects deriving from Calvin and the English Puritans. Despite the fact that heavy Teutonic knights are found in his pictures, the freshness of the female figures is triumphant, and as everything is enveloped in blond space into which the ashen reds bring a transparent vapor, one has not the courage to reproach him with unskillfulness. This rustic reveals to us an exquisite soul which, in eighty years of active life, could not exhaust its innocence.

## VI

At first sight, there is no relationship between this awkward sensibility and the ever-increasing will which permitted the last of the German painters, dead at the age of forty-six, to inclose, within the sustained undulation of a line as sober as Latin intelligence, the complexity of the German soul. Upon closer study, however, the race is the same. Hans Holbein scrutinized

the drawings of Michael Angelo, of da Vinci, and of Raphael; he studied the frescoes of Venice, of Mantua, of Padua, and of Florence, perhaps, where he was to go after leaving Basel, in search of education from the



HANS HOLBEIN. Portrait, red chalk.  
(Windsor Castle.)

Italian masters to assist him in extracting from the complex work of Cranach, of Dürer, of Grünewald, and of Martin Schoengauer the elements of a clearer and more plastic definition of the effort of Germany. A line impossible to break connects the clear, gentle, and wild portraits of Cranach, the linear and compact portraits of Dürer, all the portraits of all the Germans, from Aldegrever to Baldung

Grien, and from Bartolomäus Bruyn to Christoph Amberger, with the matchless images of the master of Basel—a line, as evanescent as the light that plays over the surface of flesh and as decisive as a bony projection, giving the sensation of the mass of a living face, of the mind, and the muscles, of the bone, and the blood, and of the soul that hovers concentrated over all.

He has already inherited from his father, the old mas-



HANS HOLBEIN. The Wife of Burgomaster Meyer,  
drawing. (*Basel Museum.*)



ter of Augsburg, that line, awkward in appearance, which so faithfully follows the contour of the face, neglecting none of the accidents—that line which, with a terrible conscientiousness, restores in the face the irregular hollows and projections, giving it its special accent, through the manner in which the eye is set in the socket, the chin and cheekbone are outlined, the nose is flattened or protruded, the forehead or temples bend or broaden. The Italians had counseled him to insist a little more here, a little less there, in order to keep the face wholly at the height of its expression. They had shown him the way to fill a frame, how to stop at the proper moment, how to establish a defined volume in space. They certainly did no more for him than that. If he chooses, as they do, it is not to generalize: it is to individualize. Instead of attempting to arrive through synthesis at a universal truth, he attains through analysis a particular truth. The instrument which he receives from the Italians is employed the more to search within him and around him for the Germany which he is to define more accurately. When he leaves Basel for London, it is still as a German that he speaks of the English. It is as a German that, in the great severe portraits—less finished, perhaps, despite their grandiose minuteness than his sketches in pencil—he accumulates on the walls, the tables, and the shelves of the furniture, a hundred objects as precise as the face, inkstands, terrestrial globes, manuscripts, squares, compasses, magnifying glasses, and parchments which, with their steel points, their copper edges, their lenses, and their legible characters, one after another convince us of the certitude as to the place where we are and the identity of the being before whom we find ourselves.

This great artist appears at first as a great scientist.



HANS HOLBEIN. His wife and children. (*Basel Museum.*)

One would say that as a good German he had made it his mission to test, one after another, the truths which the Italians or the Flemings had intuitively conquered. By dint of will power, by dint of study, he came to understand why two or three associated colors, arousing in us the sense of the original unity of things, sweeping through us with an irresistible sentiment of fullness and purifying happiness, teach us more about the things and about ourselves than a century of researches accumulated incoherently. Like the German thinkers of the eighteenth century and the German scientists of the nineteenth, it was through the patient decomposition and the methodical reconstruction of all elements that he found the harmonies which other races seize upon in a single stroke.

But how his science elevates him, as soon as he grasps it! Those harmonies, juxtaposed and no longer penetrated by that visible atmosphere which reveals to the Venetians and to the painters of the Low Countries the universal movement of life, are like a pure mass of intangible reality sustained by everything within our remembrance. His reds, his oranges, and his blacks do not seem to be rubbed upon his somber greens, but to be woven into the material itself, yielding a rich substance as if ground in a mortar—and everything contributes to it: the clothing, the metal and the glass of the implements and the jewels, the wood of the furniture, the skin of the hands and the faces, and the opaque whites of the eyes. A dull splendor, which does not radiate, but which seems, on the contrary, to sink into the center of the work, gives to all these things a cold profundity, a depth under which other depths are divined, like a pure water to the bottom of which we cannot see. In this sense, his canvases surpass those

of the primitives of Bruges, whose red and black are like blood and ink changed into translucent stones. . . . The soul, space, and the living or the dead matter are concentrated together until they attain, at the extreme point of molecular condensation, the density of the diamond.

One understands how this man, so resolute in penetrating to the central core of things, should have been, among all the men of his time who made the attempt, the one who succeeded best in giving, through his images, an eternal life to the most impartial spirit of his century; the man of almost complete wisdom, who, amid the furious tumult of appetites and consciences into which men were hurled by the struggle between the reformers and the Church, retained entire freedom of judgment. As well as Erasmus, he had certainly seen the fire lighted about the stake, the pincers opening in the depth of dungeons, the torch in the hands of the people, and the steel in the hands of the soldiers. But his impassive eye sought, in the brutal torrent of the passions let loose, the forms and movements capable of expressing the passion which led him to search for higher realities. Through his art we have seen the spears pass by, the pikes flying, and the horsemen, the executioners, and the *landsknechts* putting forth their strength; but the violence is studied without hatred or sympathy—as a human phenomenon suited to enlighten him about men. The nervous elegance of the forms in action and the roll of the muscles under the leather garb appear in sober tumult. It is as if the steel of the sword were flowing in the arteries and were vibrating in the tendons, so as to compel life, even in its bloodiest quarrels, to follow the imperious mind of an artist who, when he seeks in wine the forgetfulness of his personal

cares, seems trying to cut off from himself everything that is not the image which his eye imprints upon his mind. The curves and volutes of the German masters, who, before him, twisted even the limbs of human beings like vine branches, are concentrated



CHRISTOPH AMBERGER. Charles V.  
(*Lille Museum.*)

and stylized in the vigorous frame of fruits, leaves, and naked children with which his engravings and his drawings are surrounded. Through the force of his will, he compelled order to continue in the German soul during his lifetime. He imposed impartiality upon his creative power. The faces which he has left—those great Teutonic faces, at once bony and soft, under the shadow of

the hats—are, in the realm of painting, certainly those which have transmitted to us most scrupulously—and at the same time the most soberly—the whole truths about the beings who passed before him. Never eye more pitiless—and consequently more enamored of that which survives the illusion of sight brought about in us by our indulgence toward ourselves and toward others—never eye more pitiless than

the one he fixed upon us. Never the mind, rising up in the open eyes, the closed lips, the silent brows, and the jaws—never has the mind been more closely incorporated with the compact bones which it sculptures, and which sculpture it in a continual interchange. Now



COLINS. Capture of La Gueldu, bas-relief. (*Tomb of Maximilian, Innsbruck.*)

this mass of life thinks, now it does not think; nothing of it hovers outside itself, nothing of it escapes within. Holbein never employs his artist's piety to tell anything about nature and about its highest expression—the head of a man or of a woman—save that which they dictate to the voluntary indifference of his clear sight. Beautiful or ugly, all of these faces radiate a singular purity, which is the indescribable mark of his own dignity. He expends his whole tenderness on a feminine brow under a transparent veil, on the features, sad and grave and

heavy with humanity, of a woman who holds two children between her knees.

Although German sentimentalism is invisible in him, and doubtless because of that, Holbein represents the highest effort of German plastics. Very German in his scrupulous precision, his power of analysis and reconstruction, he is the only one of the Germans who knew how to choose, the only one who almost never confused what is beautiful with what is strange, what is essential with what is exact, what is profound with what is complicated; the only one who sought to disengage from detail and from accident, in a reality concrete in itself and outside of all realization, the secret logic of that reality. He is the only one who does not impose sentiment upon form, but seeks through form an understanding of sentiment. An incredible power of will made him slowly catch up with, and, at certain points surpass, those who have only to open their hearts to find the secret of the great plastic truths. It is natural that he should represent at once the end of German painting and the exception which proves its habitual impotence to give to the visible world its architectural meaning. In spite of him and apart from him, German painting remains a great confused murmur, quivering with indistinct life. It is the German musicians, with cries of exaltation and with the deep rapture of a universe on the point of self-discovery, who will one day seize upon the splendid weapon the painters of their country had let fall.



CRANACH. Luther's Wife. (*Berlin Museum.*)





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